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THE COMIC DIMENSION: A NEW READING OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS' LONG POEM "PATERSON"

KATHLEEN DOUGLAS MATTHEWS

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Abstract
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Chapters one through three highlight Williams' position in the literary world during the twenties, thirties and forties, his interest in satire and his eventual identification with Chaucer. Chapters four through eight reveal comic elements embedded in Paterson. As the mock epic hero Paterson, Williams competes with other literary giants, ridiculing the literary techniques which have made their poems useless for his purposes even as he develops and demonstrates new measures for the American idiom and a new stance toward American writing.

Because Williams began Paterson while he was at the bottom of the literary ladder and completed it with a fairly secure place at the top, Paterson is treated throughout as a process poem with a satirical emphasis that shifted as Williams' own literary position shifted. Though Eliot remains the archenemy throughout Paterson, Williams comes to terms with Crane, Pound and Cummings even as he emerges victorious over all in the very fiction which associates him with Wallace Stevens. In Williams' final book, he turns the spotlight on himself as the father of a new generation of poets and the discoverer of a new American prosody.

Keywords
Literature, American

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THE COMIC DIMENSION: A NEW READING OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS' LONG POEM "PATERSON"

Matthews, Kathleen Douglas, Ph.D.
University of New Hampshire, 1982

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THE COMIC DIMENSION
A NEW READING OF
WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS' LONG POEM PATERNOSTER

BY

Kathleen Douglas Matthews
B.A., Montclair State College, 1954
M.A., Montclair State College, 1956

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

THE COMIC DIMENSION
A NEW READING OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS' LONG POEM PATERSON

by

Kathleen Douglas Matthews

University of New Hampshire, May, 1982

When Williams decided in the early forties to accelerate work on the "magnum opus" he had begun fifteen years earlier, his ambitions were enormous, yet the literary establishment treated him more like a pygmy than a giant. T. S. Eliot, reigning literary pontiff, embraced the European literary tradition and ignored Williams as he had for years while Pound used Italy as a base for the economic and political tirades which eventually had him condemned as a traitor. In his long poem Paterson, Williams felt abandoned with the momentous task of discovering a poetics to fit the American idiom. His poem became a testing ground for that poetics as well as a homegrown allegory of the modern literary scene, complete with hidden portraits of Eliot, Pound, E. E. Cummings, Hart Crane and other poets. Only when Paterson is read as the imaginative biography of a misunderstood major poet with a taste for satire can Williams' full unity of purpose be understood.

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Because Williams began Paterson while he was at the bottom of the literary ladder and completed it with a fairly secure place at the top, Paterson is treated throughout as a process poem with a satirical emphasis that shifted as Williams' own literary position shifted. Though Eliot remains the archenemy throughout Paterson, Williams comes to terms with Crane, Pound and Cummings even as he emerges victorious over all in the very fiction which associates him with Wallace Stevens. In Williams' final book, he turns the spotlight on himself as the father of a new generation of poets and the discoverer of a new American prosody.
INTRODUCTION

When William Carlos Williams, at age forty-three, published an eighty-five line poem entitled "Paterson," he planted the seed of a poem that would germinate for years, a poem that would bloom before he was recognized as a major American writer, a poem that would sprout anew as he mellowed with old age and would be finished only by his death. The long Paterson that grew from the early short poem is as complex and confusing as a man's life; it has stimulated controversy to the present day.

The early "Paterson" was set aside for nearly a decade before sporadic poems appeared with titles such as "Paterson, Episode 17" and "Paterson, the Falls." These and other poems suggested a longer work in progress, but they appeared widely spaced over a six-year period. Each new poem or group of poems pointed toward a different direction Williams might take in his long poem. Some would be eliminated from the later longer work, but all indicated Williams' changing attitudes toward the purpose of his long poem. Finally, when the first full-length book of a projected four-book poem appeared in 1946, most of the earliest "Paterson" had been divided into segments with each segment embedded in new poetry interspersed with fragments of prose, prose not written by Williams but altered slightly to fit his purposes, altered slightly enough to
confound critics for years. Letters from friends and histor­ic accounts about Paterson supplemented fragments of poetry describing the city Williams had chosen as subject for his poem.

Over the next decade, Williams completed not only the projected four books but also a fifth. All followed the format of poetry interlaced with prose. Williams' poetry, however, took different forms in different books and even included a pastoral "Idyl" in Book Four. Prose, too, was expanded to include such items as a letter from a stranger, an advertisement, and even the bare facts of a drilling report. Each book added to the puzzle of what Williams was attempting; each received mixed reviews and diverse commentary, and criticism grew harsher with each new book. Only gradually did a few critics begin to see coherence in Paterson and a relationship to earlier works by Williams. When Book Four was published with the earlier three books, however, critical opinions diverged even more, and Book Five, added a full six years after the original poem had been thought complete, confused matters for some critics but clarified for others. When Williams died in 1963, fragments of poems intended for a sixth book were published along with the other five books, and critics began to peck their way, little by little, into the completed poem. Opinion was still mixed; criticism ranged from qualified acclaim to deprecation, and Paterson became one of the most
maligned, praised and pondered long poems of the twentieth century.

Some critical controversy about Paterson can be ascribed to readers' expectations. Book One appeared after T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets, and the entire Paterson was written while Ezra Pound was in the midst of writing his life work, The Cantos. Eliot's integration of myth, history, personal memories and contemporary events had started a literary trend which may have led some readers to look for the same elements in Williams' poem. Indeed, these elements are there. Pound's blending of early American history with a healthy dose of economic propaganda and his use of letters from historic figures in The Cantos also may have established a set of preconceptions which the more knowledgeable of Williams' readers readily brought to his work. Pound had been both an old friend and one-time literary mentor to Williams. What could have seemed more logical than seeking similarities in the major long poems of these two poets? Like The Cantos, Paterson can be read on an historic level and on a sociocultural level including economic implications which critics have associated with Pound's work and thought. Both levels are interwoven with a more personal dimension and can be seen in clearer perspective when the poem is read primarily as imaginative autobiography.

Although Paterson is ostensibly a poem about a city, the city is treated imaginatively as a man, a man who is
both a poet and, as the poem progresses, a doctor. The hero of *Paterson* is, in fact, Williams himself exaggerated to larger-than-life proportions with several of his literary friends and enemies also drawn in the dimension of caricature. Thus, the poem is essentially a comedy, a comedy often laced with literary satire, parodies of and answers to other poems, parries of and thrusts at other poets. *Paterson* is not only an attempt to convey local history and relate it to contemporary events. It is also a way of clearing the ground for Williams' own ideas about literature and language, a poem with a hidden dimension, hidden because readers so often find only what they expect to find and because Williams was really a timid satirist, often unsure which level of his multilevel poem should predominate.

Furthermore, *Paterson* is a process poem, a poem that changed shape even as it was being written, a poem originally intended as four books that grew to five and beyond. *Paterson* was planned during the years when Williams was categorized as a limited writer by the literary establishment, a time when he had good reasons to vent his anger and frustrations at such shortsighted evaluation. Ironically, Williams' reputation took a leap forward with the publication of Book One and then continued to grow even though some critics believed the later books fell short of the poem's promising beginning. As Williams' recognition grew, his need for satire diminished, and the poem that began
with a hidden volley of shots at T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Hart Crane concluded not with the "bang" Williams may once have contemplated, but surely not with a "whimper."
The fourth book contained a firm assertion that the hero, Paterson, would stand firm on his American soil untouched by foreign influences which Williams believed had ruined his compatriots. In failing to conclude with the heavy satire he had once planned, however, Williams also failed to reveal with certainty his own central role in the poem. A fifth book was necessary to place Williams at the very center of his poem, and even more importantly, to show his triumph as a major writer who had gone beyond other American writers.

Throughout all of the five books, Williams included more self-revelation than the obvious autobiographical material that links him to his hero, Paterson. Using a kind of homegrown allegory with satiric intent, Williams ridiculed his compatriots who had missed the boat, who would not survive the flood of language he hoped to control in his own "magnum opus," who would not or could not participate in the discovery of an American idiom and a new metric to fit it. Williams believed the serious poet's talents should be devoted to exploring the uses of his own native language and discovering a new metric, but he also believed the poet should be capable of recognizing his own discoveries and applying them to a poetry which can accurately depict the world around him. Thus, Williams' poem
involves a search for his own language, a demonstration of where and how to search, but also a collection of hidden yet pointed thrusts at those able writers whom he believed had been sidetracked from such a search and carried away on single-minded excursions into religion, myth and economics. Only when Williams' hidden dimension is uncovered can the remainder of the poem be seen in full perspective.

The purpose of this dissertation is to highlight the third dimension, the comic level. In Book One, Williams calls his material "triple piled," but he had forewarned his readers of three levels even when he wrote his preface. In the preface, Williams characterizes his poem as "just another dog/ among a lot of dogs." Because more able poets have deserted America in their work, Williams has been left behind to explore the American idiom in his own way. Because "the others have run out--/ after the rabbits," Williams' poem may appear crippled: "Only the lame stands-- on/ three legs." I hope to reveal the third leg of Paterson, the comic leg which must be given full weight along with the historical and sociocultural legs of the poem, the leg which supports Williams' own poetics even as it undercuts poetic theories of his compatriots. I hope when this is done that Paterson will stand as securely as Williams intended.
CHAPTER I

A PLACE AT THE BOTTOM

Paterson is a poem that grew with a man. It developed in relation to his literary ambitions, his failures, his frustrations, and his successes. Because it grew slowly over a period of thirty-six years, it changed as its author changed. Williams began writing Paterson before he fully realized his own intellectual and educational limitations. The earliest "Paterson" reflects a spirit of optimism and unbridled ambition with pretentions toward an American philosophy, pretentions that briefly sent Williams on an exploration of his own philosophy. Williams continued the poem after he had painfully determined his limitations as a philosopher but also when he had begun to understand his unique abilities. He returned to the poem with a mission, a determination to assert his beliefs about the American language and the kind of poetry he believed Americans should be writing. Since the first four books were planned before giants of the literary world recognized either Williams or his mission, the poem became not only a demonstration of his search for a language but also a vehicle for venting his frustrations. It became his proclamation of what the serious writer should be about and his allegory of the byways into which other writers had
been enticed and trapped. It became a dialogue with Ezra Pound, an answer to T. S. Eliot and a gentle laugh at Hart Crane. It became the place where Williams could define himself in relation to his fellow poets who had reached the top of the literary ladder even as Williams plodded away at the bottom.

Pound had been the earliest poet to influence Williams' life and writing. Ever since college days at the University of Pennsylvania, Pound had attempted to teach Williams the craft of writing poetry, and though his appearance in the early "Paterson" was oblique, almost obscure, he was there in spirit and would become a major figure in the later longer poem that grew from the early "Paterson."

Eliot had impinged on Williams' life by way of Pound. Like Pound, he had rejected his native land for a more suitable cultural milieu. With Pound's assistance, he had risen to literary prominence with such brilliance in *The Waste Land* that he seemed to shatter the very foundations Williams had thought he was building for an American approach to both language and literature. The early "Paterson" can easily be viewed as Williams' naive attempt to rival *The Waste Land* on a philosophical level while treating an American subject. Though this effort failed, much of the later longer *Paterson* would be devoted to undermining Eliot's position as a major American poet of the twentieth century.
Hart Crane had followed in Eliot's wake and had achieved a significant literary reputation slightly after the early "Paterson" was published. He had also borrowed heavily from Williams to create his "American myth" and needed to be kicked gently but firmly into the wings of the literary theater if Williams was to occupy the limelight he felt he deserved by the time he was writing his long poem. Other poets would also be caricatured in the long poem Paterson but none so consistently as Pound, Eliot and Crane.

Williams was far from a beginning writer in February of 1927 when his early "Paterson" appeared in The Dial. He was the author of eight books, had received The Dial award for poetry the previous year and had won enthusiastic though limited praise for his collection of essays about American historical figures, In the American Grain. As early as 1920, in cooperation with Robert McAlmon, he had established his own small literary magazine, Contact, and though Contact folded in 1924 after only five issues, Williams retained a lively interest in the little magazine field.

Williams had good reasons for his interest. Nearly all of his own poems had been first published in small, often short-lived publications, and in addition, a revolution in poetry had begun and flourished in the little magazines. His old friend Pound had been at the heart of this revolution. Living in Europe, Pound inhaled new ideas and
ingested new artistic trends to be digested and incorporated into the body of his own literary intelligence and spilled out as the lifeblood of a poetic revival. Pound used little magazines on both sides of the Atlantic to introduce such concepts as "imagism" and "vorticism" and to promote the work of his fellow poets and literary friends. His manifestoes and proclamations about poetry were published in both England and France. In America, they reached the literary public through magazines such as Poetry, The Little Review and The Dial, whose editors were willing to take a chance on something new.

While Williams had established his practice as a medical doctor in his home town and relegated writing to whatever spare time he could find, Pound had dedicated all his energies to artistic and literary pursuits. From 1908 to 1920, Pound chose London as a base for his sallies into poetry, art and music. As a self-proclaimed poet, discoverer of new talent, publisher and critic, Pound bullied and blasted his way into London literary society. He discovered and proclaimed the merits of such talented and diverse writers as Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot and James Joyce plus numerous literary figures less known today. He served as secretary to William Butler Yeats, became art or music critic for such British magazines as The New Age and The Egoist and helped to create the short-lived polemical Blast which eventually cost him much of his prestige with the British literary establishment. In addition to
publishing a volume of his own poems. *A Lume Spento*, and a collection of imagist lyrics, *Des Imagistes*, Pound frequently handled the publication in London of friends' works as he did in 1912 for Williams' second volume of poems, *The Tempers*. As foreign editor of *Poetry*, foreign correspondent for *The Little Review* and contributor to *The Dial* and any other magazines open to his program, Pound also wielded a heavy clout in American literary life.

Though Williams was not the only poet who seemed to travel on the dynamic Pound's shirttails, he was undoubtedly pleased to be associated with Pound, particularly in the teens and early twenties when Pound was spending his vast energies promoting an abundant crop of new young authors. Pound delighted in evaluating their work both in relation to new artistic trends on the continent and in accordance with his own developing standards of poetry. During these years, Pound not only forced editors to publish work he believed important; he also wrote hundreds of letters to individual writers ruthlessly but brilliantly criticizing their poems and suggesting everything from closer attention to metrics to educational reading programs in an effort to help them improve their craft. One such letter addressed to Williams in 1909 after Williams had sent Pound his first collection of published poems, began, "I hope to God you have no feelings. If you have burn this before reading."
After such a tempting opener, Pound offers only one positive comment: "As proof that W.C.W. has poetic instincts the book is valuable." He briefly apologizes by way of admitting he commits many of the same errors he condemns but devotes most of the letter to lecturing Williams on how to learn his art thoroughly. Pound suggests first that Williams read "Yeats and Browning and Francis Thompson and Swinburne and Rossetti," so he might learn "something about the progress of English poetry in the last century." He also includes another list of second rank poets so Williams may realize "what damn good work" they do.

Though Williams sometimes bristled at Pound's pedagogical approach, there is evidence in The Tempers that Williams had indeed followed at least part of Pound's advice. Echoes of the Pre-Raphaelites, early Yeats, and Browning are enough to identify Williams as a diligent, if unappreciative, student of schoolmaster Pound. A 1913 group of letters from Williams to Harriet Monroe, editor of Poetry, also indicates that Williams acknowledged Pound's power to deal with literary legislators. Although Monroe accepted some of Williams' poems, she rejected others and she also rejected a critical essay (probably "Speech Rhythms") because it was not as finished a product as she would like. Williams expostulates with Monroe in one letter, and in another he tells her she should be concerned lest she get "nothing but that which is hammered and worked out--except when the divine Ezra bludgeons you into it."
Four days later, when Monroe had evidently suggested that Williams submit the essay to Pound for commentary, Williams repeats his sarcastic epithet for Pound, assuring Monroe that "the divine shall be greeted and the words presented to him for the acid test."^4

Though Williams could joke about Pound's pontificating, he also valued Pound's judgments. By 1918, Williams was writing to his friend Marianne Moore, another poet, about the merit of Pound's criticism of her work: "If there is one thing that stands out clearly above Ezra's other perfections, it is his unswerving intelligence in the direction of literary quality."^5 When Williams wrote this, Pound's "unswerving intelligence" was already at work promoting Williams' new book, Al Que Quierre. In reviewing the book for London's Future along with new works by three other Americans, Marianne Moore, Mina Loy and T. S. Eliot, Pound gave more space to Williams than to any of the others. He quoted in full two poems by Williams, "The Old Men" and "Portrait of a Woman in Bed," comparing the latter to work of Rimbaud. Pound also noted that such work "could be translated into French or any other modern language and hold its own with the contemporary product of whatever country one chose."^6

Whether Pound's Rimbaud comparison was recognition of another educational track Pound had suggested or a path Williams had taken in his own education, Williams was busy during 1917 and 1918 producing his own Rimbaud-like prose
poems which he first called "Improvisations" but which were published in 1920 under the title *Kora in Hell*. Williams attributed the book's format to a book Pound had once left at Williams' home and the title to a past conversation between himself and Pound. In the Prologue, however, Williams indicated a growing impatience with Pound's pretensions to knowledge about what American writers can and cannot accomplish. Williams' quarrel with Pound was mainly related to Pound's editing of an article by English critic Edgar Jepson attacking the school of native American poets which Williams felt duty-bound to defend. To make matters worse, Jepson had singled out Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "La Figlia Che Piange" as particularly representative of the modern United States. Williams couldn't accept such commentary without retort. Protestation on behalf of his own American writer friends Maxwell Bodenheim and Alfred Kreymborg in the early pages of his Prologue gives way to mockery of Pound in the closing pages. In speaking of the Prologue many years later, Williams focused on the importance played in his own career by other poets but also indicated his readiness to reject as well as accept advice.

All my gripes to other poets, all my loyalties to other poets, are here in the Prologue. It has been referred to many times because it includes extracts of important letters from people who influenced me in my career. I paid attention very assiduously to what I was told. I often reacted violently, but I weighed what had been told me thoroughly. It was always my own mind I was making up.
Pound's response both to the Prologue and the book gave Williams new standing in the relationship between the two friends. Pound was quick to realize that Williams' Prologue was far more than either a profession of loyalty or a collection of cranky gripes. He saw it as the counterattack it was on his and Eliot's international literary approach, on their attempt to interrelate European literature of all eras at the cost of ignoring American work. He knew Williams considered some American work important which he considered inferior. In a series of three letters written over the course of two days, Pound first reacts to the Prologue by defending his position as an expatriate leader of the poetic revolution who damns bad writing and praises good no matter where it originates, next praises the book as the "best you have done" and finally reacts in a burst of anger to Williams' accusation that he and Eliot are imitators of medieval French and Italian writers. In retaliation, he suggests that "Improvisations" have been consciously or unconsciously derived from Rimbaud, undoubtedly his *Saison en Enfer*. Though the three letters are written partially in anger and from a posture of defense, Pound also recognizes Williams for the first time as an equal and suggests that the two poets are complements to each other: "Possibly lamentable that the two halves of what might have made a fairly decent poet should be sequestered and divided by the buttocks of the arse-wide Atlantic Ocean." Pound also requests Williams' continuing candid criticism of his
work and admits he will particularly welcome comments on his two recent poems "Homage to Sextus Propertius" and "Mauberly." Finally, Pound had accorded Williams the recognition he deserved. Though their relationship would alternate between this friendly sparring of poetic brothers and the later exasperation of political antagonists, Williams had by 1920 earned his independence from "the divine Ezra."

In future letters, Williams would share ideas with Pound rather than submit his work for Pound's critical scrutiny. There is neither lightly humorous adulation nor profoundly defensive obeisance in Williams' December letter to Pound regarding Pound's article on the relation of music to poetry in 1-9-2-4, a magazine published in that year. Williams knew they shared an interest in metrics and that Pound might be interested in some of his own thoughts on the subject: "I may want to send you some recent prose of mine to read; your 'notes' have greatly encouraged me to trust my studies."¹¹

Pound, however, had already moved beyond writing criticisms, educational programs and advice to his literary friends. In 1922, he had attempted to set up an organization entitled "Bel Esprit" which would "release as many captives as possible" from the mundane workaday world so they might concentrate all their energies on literary endeavors and increase their knowledge of civilization. Pound wrote to many friends soliciting funds for the
project. A mid-March letter to Williams suggests that Pound's first gesture will be to rescue Eliot from his job as bank clerk. Pound cites Eliot's recent emotional breakdown as the major reason for assisting him. He believes Eliot and other artists will be able to produce outstanding work if they can be guaranteed leisure in which to write. As proof of Eliot's talent, he mentions The Waste Land, written during Eliot's convalescence and according to Pound, "one of the most important 19 pages in English." Near the end of the year, when The Waste Land was published simultaneously in The Criterion in England and The Dial in America, it was dedicated to Pound, "il miglior fabbro," the better craftsman. Williams would later declare the publication of Eliot's poem had hit him "like a sardonic bullet" and that it had wiped out much of the groundwork he had developed toward building his own particularly American platoon of the modern poetic revolution. Williams saw Eliot's poem as a personal defeat and believed Eliot had carried Williams' world "off with him, the fool, to the enemy." As late as the publication of his autobiography in 1951, Williams still rankled when he referred to the illustrious Eliot. Eliot had not only captured a worldwide intellectual audience; he had turned his back on America with Williams' oldest and closest literary friend as an accomplice.

Though Williams undoubtedly felt overshadowed during those years in the twenties when both Eliot and Pound
appeared to be skyrocketing to literary immortality, he learned what he could from them and gradually differentiated his work from theirs. He read Eliot's work carefully and began to see his own ideas in contrast to Eliot's. Although he continued to maintain a correspondence with Pound, he now tested Pound's ideas in relation to his own. After spending the first six months of 1924 in Europe and briefly visiting Pound during this sabbatical, Williams returned home more determined than ever to follow his own instincts about writing. He had spent the earlier half of his year away from his medical practice looking into American history and had still been writing In the American Grain during his visit to Europe. This book and Williams' decided preference for remaining in his native country clearly placed him in a different camp from the two expatriates who had chosen to find their places in an international literary scene rather than a local one.

Furthermore, Williams had begun to speculate on how he might best compete with these two literary giants. Late in 1925, Williams wrote to John Riordan, a young engineer he had met at the A. R. Orage writing class, and complained about "no satisfactory philosophy of art." In the same letter, he recognized his inability to compete with Eliot "in knowledge of philosophy" and declared that the only avenue open to him was to write poetry. He continued, "That's where the opportunity lies. The answer to Eliot, as to Pound, is careful, thoroughly organized work, that
discovers beyond them. . ." However, sometime between writing this letter and the publication of "Paterson" in 1927, Williams evidently believed he had found a way to apply a particularly American philosophy to his own art, the philosophy propounded by John Dewey.

Williams had first become interested in Dewey early in the twenties when he and McAlmon, as editors of Contact, had been involved in promoting localism. The very title of their magazine suggested the vital need for writers to maintain contact with their immediate surroundings. This need was closely associated with an article by Dewey which depicts America as "a spread of localities." Dewey contends that for a truly American literature, writers should attend to the romance and drama depicted in local newspaper stories. They should explore their own neighborhoods. Such exploration, according to Dewey, involves more than portraying provincial characters who suggest local color. Writers also must study the backgrounds of their communities, know the social and economic forces which have conditioned people's lives, understand local traditions and the effects of these traditions. Only by touching the daily concerns of men's personal lives can the localism of any given community assume universality. 15 The first three issues of Contact all have references to "localism" written either by Williams or his co-editor, McAlmon. In the second issue, a quotation from Dewey's article is placed side by side with a quotation from the artist Maurice Vlaminck:
"We are discovering that the locality is the only universal (Dewey); intelligence is international, stupidity is national, art is local (Vlaminck)."  

If Williams was to compete with Eliot and Pound, he needed to find the universal in his own locality, and he appeared to be following Dewey's advice in the early "Paterson." The local, hence universal, elements of Williams' first "Paterson" include the minutely described but unnamed Passaic River, the factories, the people of the city, their desires, despairs and anxieties, and their champion in the guise of Mr. Paterson, "that great philosopher." Since Mr. Paterson is obviously a fictionalized version of Williams himself, Williams may have naively believed that he could, after all, compete with Eliot on a philosophical plane. The emphasis on localism suggests one connection with Dewey, and another is suggested in a thrice-repeated line which proposes the poem's central concept: "no ideas but in things." "No ideas but in things" and a further refinement of this statement, "no ideas beside the facts," also suggest that by 1927 Williams had read Dewey's Reconstruction in Philosophy. These lines appear to be a poetic summary of Dewey's new approach to philosophy. Careful observation of facts, discovery of their meanings and consequences is for Dewey the first step in changing a situation. Dewey's book would have been particularly appealing to Williams. Not only is the book unusually comprehensible for a philosophical treatise, but
in it, Dewey refutes the philosophical position of F. H. Bradley, and Eliot had written his Harvard doctoral dissertation on Bradley. It is significant that the early "Paterson" can be read as an application of both Dewey's localism and concepts he expressed in *Reconstruction in Philosophy*.

In this early work, Dewey stresses the need for new ideas based on careful observations of the changing world as a replacement for the absolute ideality and rationality which had dominated western thought since the writings of Plato and Aristotle. He relates ideality to the belief that true reality is changeless and cites F. H. Bradley as the absolutist of his own day who expresses the doctrine "Nothing that is perfectly real moves."\(^{18}\) Dewey sees in the ideal world of classic philosophy a "haven in which man finds rest from the storms of life" and "an asylum in which he takes refuge from the troubles of existence with the calm assurance that it alone is supremely real."\(^{19}\) In opposition to this perspective, Dewey calls for ideas in keeping with the scientific advancement of the age, ideas which will substitute practical knowledge for contemplative knowledge and experimentation for pure theoretical speculation. These ideas are to be derived from careful observation of the world, but not a static world, rather a world of change, of occurrences that can disclose possibilities for actual improvement in an imperfect world. For Dewey, ideas derived from observation and testing are the
beginning of thought, and such thought can lead to the solution of real problems. He insists, however, that ideas must be tested in practical situations. He explains how mathematics have been derived from a series of hypotheses which were practically tested and from which were selected only those theories which survived numerous experiments. If moral, social and aesthetic considerations could be submitted to the same pragmatic treatment, Dewey maintains that a reconstruction in philosophy could perfect a method of viewing life which would affect the daily lives of individuals.

In his early chapters of *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, Dewey had spoken of philosophical preconceptions which presented truth as static and had thus prevented man from searching for new truths. Only when a man such as Sir Francis Bacon could question received truth and test it by new experience had science moved forward. Bacon's discovery that knowledge can become power in the scientific world, however, had not been carried over into the philosophical realm and thus into the lives of men. A group of idealists preferred to quarrel about how man acquired his knowledge rather than test hypotheses and promote a use for knowledge. By accident, philosophy thus became theoretical and useless. Dewey urged a new look at philosophy from a more practical viewpoint. If the ideas and methods of science could shed new light on man's social and moral life, a
reconstruction in philosophy could improve day to day living.

Though in 1927 Dewey's long-range forecast of an empiricism turned pragmatic was a long way from popular application, Williams seemed to see the values of applying Dewey's concepts of observation to a study of his own home area, Paterson. Williams' early "Paterson" begins during "the pause between/ snow and grass," that period when spring is immanent, but Williams downplays the traditionally symbolic element of spring and opts instead for a discovery of ideas in "things" around him. 20

Before the grass is out the people are out and bare twigs still whip the wind--
When there is nothing, in the pause between snow and grass in the parks and at the street ends
--Say it, no ideas but in things--
nothing but the blank faces of the houses and cylindrical trees
bent, forked by preconception and accident
split, furrowed, creased, mottled, stained secret--into the body of the light--
These are the ideas, savage and tender
somewhat of the music, et cetera
of Paterson, that great philosopher--

Williams, like Dewey, wants to view old attitudes with new scientific accuracy. Spring offers a chance to consider the people of his city in a new light, a light which will reveal a plurality of forces working in their lives. The poet must look inside "blank faces of houses" and beyond "trees...stained secret" to find his ideas.

Williams, in this opening stanza, seems to be progressing along lines proposed by Dewey: he will observe so closely in the new light that he will discover the secret of things
around him. He is not forgetting, however, an interest in metrics shared with his old friend Pound, for the ideas will also be Paterson's music. In the later, longer Paterson, only lines five through ten would be retained, but these would serve two decades later as a reminder that Williams still sought his own knowledge in his immediate surroundings.

Throughout the early poem, Paterson struggles with the actualities of his immediate world, seeking in them a meaning that gives both dignity and beauty to dull lives, never avoiding economic necessities or ugliness which Dewey had accused the idealists of seeking to transcend. The second stanza introduces the Paterson waterfall as beauty bursting forth after its path through a landscape characterized by death and decay.

From above, higher than the spires, higher even then the office towers, from ozzy fields abandoned to grey beds of dead grass black sumac, withered weed stalks mud and thickets cluttered with dead leaves-- the river comes pouring in above the city and crashes from the edge of the gorge in a recoil of spray and rainbow mists--

Yet Williams is content neither with the dank and dead imagery of winter nor the promising glory of a spring rainbow. He recalls himself instead to the poem's primary purpose and to the practical economic function of the falls.

--Say it, no ideas but in things-- and factories crystallized from its force, like ice from spray upon the chimney rocks
The first eight lines of this second stanza would be retained, but Williams' attitudes toward factories would be greatly expanded to include their history as part of a plan by Alexander Hamilton to make Paterson the economic hub of the country. In the earlier poem, however, the factories are important primarily as a means of subsistence for those who live in areas around the river. Paterson wants to learn of these people, to see their lives so clearly that he can bring together all the particular factors necessary to generate new ideas which will answer problems of daily life. The people become his thoughts, but because Williams is one of these people, he becomes both the observer and the observed, a part of his own mathematical problem.

Say it! No ideas but in things. Mr. Paterson has gone away to rest and write. Inside the bus one sees his thoughts sitting and standing. His thoughts alight and scatter—

Who are these people (how complex this mathematic) among whom I see myself in the regularly ordered plateglass of his thoughts, glimmering before shoes and bicycles—? They walk incommunicado, the equation is beyond solution, yet its sense is clear—that they may live his thought is listed in the Telephone Directory—

Though Williams questions the possibility of ever solving so complex an equation as that suggested by the needs and desires of his people, he is certain that the people who are his thoughts are the most important aspect of his life and work, that his work should directly affect their lives. Like Dewey, Williams seeks ideas which will lead to
practical solutions. These two stanzas would appear intact in the later poem and function as part of the unit which introduces Paterson the man.

Though the early "Paterson" includes six more stanzas, only two of these plus the three final lines of the early poem would be retained. However, these stanzas do suggest considerations that interested Williams in 1927. One stanza depicts "Young Alex Shorn" whose dad has painted a house inside "with seascapes of a pale green monochrome--" and compares Alex to such Greek gods as the infant Dionysus, Hermes and Cupid. The comparisons strongly suggest a tendency to idealize lives led behind the blank faces of the houses rather than to discover a way to reconcile the people with their world. Such description seems out of place and may have been used to show what a poet is tempted to do but what Williams is unwilling to continue. The stanza would be entirely excluded from the later, longer poem.

The next stanza returns abruptly to the local routine of daily life as Paterson questions, "Who are these people?" He identifies himself as one of them "making the traffic, cranking the car/ buying the meat--" He also sets himself apart from them as he recognizes that they are unable to solve their own problems and in their defeat, they "fall back among cheap pictures, furniture/ filled silk, cardboard shoes, bad dentistry/ windows that will not open, poisonous gin/ scurvy, toothache--" Had the poem
ended at this point, it might have been as despairing a picture of modern life as Eliot's *Waste Land* published four and a half years earlier. The poem's final stanza, however, undercuts such a one-sided perspective and presents instead a view of winter and spring that is both realistic and optimistic.

What wind and sun of children stamping the snow stamping the snow and screaming drunkenly
The actual, florid detail of cheap carpet amazingly upon the floor and paid for
as no portrait ever was—Canary singing
and geraniums in tin cans spreading their leaves reflecting red upon the frost—
They are the divisions and imbalances
of his whole concept, made small by pity
and desire, they are—no ideas beside the facts—

The joy of "children... stamping the snow and screaming drunkenly" and the pride in even a "cheap carpet" which is "paid for" are far more important to the people of Paterson than any "portrait" which might symbolize a more traditional beauty. This stanza contains neither an idealized comparison with a long-dead culture nor a lament for modern impoverished lives. It depicts rather the homely beauty so typical of Williams' early poems. The "Canary singing/ and geraniums in tin cans" are scenes Dr. Williams may well have observed as he visited the homes of his patients. Williams could appreciate the joy such possessions brought their owners at the same time he realized their lives could be richer if they could see their values celebrated in a national literature. He realized the cheap carpet and geraniums in tin cans revealed attempts to find
beauty which were only partially successful. He wanted to recognize the aspirations of his people but also to find a language which would celebrate the common man and give him a sense of pride in his own history. Much of the longer poem would be devoted to finding this language, and entire episodes would replace the concepts expressed in the first seven lines of the earlier stanza. Only the last three lines would be retained, and these would be slightly modified. At this early stage, however, Williams could at least recognize that people's lives were many-sided, filled with "divisions and imbalances" which a poet might pity and desire to rectify. Recognition of all the facts was only a beginning, but at least it was a beginning.

Two unusual stanzas from the early "Paterson" also suggest the slightest beginning of a satiric dimension to the poem.

But never, in despair and anxiety
forget to drive wit in, in till it
discover that his thoughts are decorous
and simple, the despair and anxiety
the grace and detail of
a dynamo--

Twice a month Paterson receives letters from the Pope, his works are translated into French, the clerks in the post office un gum the rare stamps from his packages and steal them for their children's albums

The first stanza involves a problem which Williams faced not only with the earlier poem but also with the later poem: how much could or should wit be used to alter the facts of a given situation? The mind can and does act
as a dynamo by converting observations or thoughts into poems which are themselves a kind of energy-producing machine. In the earlier poem, Williams appears to conclude that wit must be held to a minimum in any serious poem. However, when he later used this same stanza, it was embedded in material associated with Eliot and a parody of Eliot's work. By the later poem, he had determined that the dynamo of the mind should be permitted to convert and manipulate the thoughts of others whenever it was necessary to suit the author's purposes. As the longer poem began to develop on a satiric level as well as an historic level, Williams learned to change direct data in minor ways so the alert mind could discover differing layers of meaning.

The latter stanza undoubtedly is related to Pound in both the earlier poem and the later long poem. If Paterson has been a pseudonym for Williams throughout the poem, the Pope must surely refer to "the divine Ezra" who had on several occasions suggested that Williams' poems were suitable for translation. It is also significant that by 1927 Pound had moved permanently to Rapallo, Italy. However, in Williams' own locality, both translations of Paterson's work and the Pope's importance are measured by the rare stamps on foreign packages which the post office clerks steal for their children's albums. The mild satire seems equally directed at both Paterson who has pretensions to international fame and the Pope, who may be viewing Paterson's work with unnecessary pomp. In the later poem,
this reference is expanded to include two would-be directors of Paterson's literary affairs: "Twice a month Paterson receives communications from the Pope and Jacques Barzun (Isocrates)." When asked years later what he meant by the Barzun reference, Williams replied that he "hoped to get something of the universal academic." The generalization could easily be applied to Pound, who, despite his political and literary disrepute in the mid-forties when Williams changed the reference, could still be viewed as both an academic and a modern-day Isocrates. By this time, however, Williams may well have intended the Pope to refer to Eliot. Though Eliot wrote no personal letters to Williams, he had embraced religion and had also become the literary pontiff of the period. His letters to various literary magazines were accepted by many academic poets as sacred.

The brief touches of satire in the short "Paterson" indicate that Williams may have considered undercutting Eliot and Pound at the same time he was challenging them with an American philosophy. The satiric impulse, however, would be postponed for many years, years when Williams would discover his limitations and clarify his own goals. Williams knew the development of a philosopher-protagonist would require more than a passing acquaintance with a few works by John Dewey, and for the next few years his energies would be devoted partially toward defining his own philosophy.
When the early "Paterson" appeared in February of 1927, Williams had also been introduced by his friend Riordan to Alfred North Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World*. Riordan gave Williams a copy of the book in December of 1926, and Williams may have begun reading Whitehead even before his early "Paterson" went to press. If he had reached the second chapter, he would have found a discussion of a mathematical link to philosophy which goes beyond Dewey. In this chapter, Whitehead discusses mathematics as an important element in the history of thought, stressing mathematical ability to abstract general ideas from particular circumstances. He traces two great periods when mathematics had a direct influence upon general thought: the first stretching from Pythagoras to Plato and the second occurring during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both periods which led "toward the reconstruction of traditional ways." He also notes that a new mathematic mentality has begun to emerge in the twentieth century and relates it to a period of new opportunities much as Dewey had done: "We are entering upon an age of reconstruction, in religion, in science and in political thought." In concluding his chapter, Whitehead questions whether "Pythagoras in founding European philosophy and European mathematics" may have had a "flash of divine genius, penetrating to the inmost nature of things."

Whether Williams read this chapter before or after he had coined the phrase "no ideas but in things," he certainly
found support for the importance of mathematics and philosophy in his own world, the world of the twentieth century poet.

The busy life of a doctor, husband, and father of two adolescent boys, however, allowed little time for the study of philosophy and Williams did not finish reading Whitehead's book until ten months after he had received it. Only in the fall of 1927, when his wife and two sons were spending a year in Switzerland, did Williams return to his reading of Whitehead. He completed his reading on the boat trip back to America after he had left his family in Europe and wrote an impressive reaction on the flyleaf: "Sept. 27, 1927—A milestone surely in my career, should I have the force and imagination to go on with my work." Considered in relation to the philosopher—protagonist in "Paterson," this inscription suggests that Williams, at that point, probably did hope to compete with Eliot and Pound on a philosophic level. The awe which the book seems to have inspired, however, also suggests the old doubts that his small knowledge of philosophy could prove a stumbling block.

During the next three years, Williams would ponder ideas by both Dewey and Whitehead, would read Henry Adams and explore his own ideas in relation to these and other thinkers. He would record these explorations and ruminations but would emerge with the old doubts paramount and
with the understanding that for him philosophy must be sub­sumed under daily living and knowledge must be acquired as a continual and continuing experience related to his own circumstances and environment. Williams' early plunge into philosophy, however, would provide a groundwork for his future writing and would help him see both his own limits and the limits of other quasi-philosophical poets, including his adversary, Eliot. Notes made during these three years of studying, pondering and fretting over his own understandings of science and philosophy are recorded in a book entitled *The Embodiment of Knowledge.*

Though *The Embodiment of Knowledge* was not published until 1975, a typed manuscript indicates that Williams did plan it for publication. Williams specifies however that the collection is intended "to go along with a life and to be in no sense its objective." 26 One of Williams' notes claims the work has "no arrangement"; however, the collection is loosely organized. Dates on many of the notes and essays indicate that Williams does not arrange the material chronologically; rather, he begins with complaints about the partialness and compartmentalization of American education, circles around through meditations on the partialness of philosophy, overspecialization in science and the need to grasp knowledge as a whole. He finally returns to suggestions for improvement in American education based on his meditations and a final emphasis on "the pluralism of experience" which must be discovered in one's own "locality."
Throughout the collection, Williams stresses the importance of Shakespeare as a writer who knew the wholeness of life and embodied this wholeness in his plays by the use of many and diverse characters. In several essays, Bacon is used to represent the importance but ephemerality of scientific achievement whereas Shakespeare represents the endurance of poetry which captures a totality of knowledge. Williams also identifies himself with Shakespeare by entitling one essay, "William Shakespeare, my Grandfather."

In *The Embodiment of Knowledge*, Williams attacks all individual branches of learning as partial, but science and philosophy become his arch villains because he believes they mistakenly imply some form of ultimately complete knowledge similar to the complete education sought by Henry Adams in *The Education of Henry Adams*. In opposition to any concept of a complete knowledge, Williams considered knowledge as a process intimately connected with daily living and never completed. This undoubtedly placed him more in line with Whitehead than he may have imagined; however, Williams gradually became more interested in rationalizing the poet's place in society than in turning his poetry into a philosophical commentary. He realized that twentieth century discoveries in science and new approaches in philosophy should have a relationship to modern developments in the arts, but at times he showed concern lest science and philosophy overshadow literature to the point where all
men were incapable of viewing life wholly: "But the whole world has been and is blinded now by the effects of Science and Philosophy from birth up. Science is a deceit; Philosophy is a sham; these are not life, but a scum over it through which we see torturedly. But poetry is the breath of life itself."27

Such a statement is far removed from the enthusiasm Williams had for philosophy both in his early "Paterson" and in his letters to his wife after he finished reading Science and the Modern World.28 It is quite possible that the more Williams attempted to define his own philosophy, the more he became aware of exactly how great a gap existed between himself and Eliot. Eliot had been thoroughly educated in philosophy and could use his wide knowledge of the discipline to undergird both his poetry and his literary criticism. Williams seemed to be going in circles without either an ability or desire to grasp any systematic approach to philosophy.

Eliot's presence hovers over several of the essays in The Embodiment of Knowledge, and Eliot becomes representative of all specialists in both literary criticism and philosophy. Two references to the "sacred grove" and one to the "sacred wood" indicate that Williams was familiar with Eliot's collection of literary essays entitled The Sacred Wood which was reissued in 1928 and that Williams also knew the relationship of Eliot's title to Sir James Frazer's anthropological approach to myth in The Golden Bough.
Eliot had used "the sacred wood" as a symbol for the immortal poetic tradition, but Williams uses it interchangeably with Frazer's term "the sacred grove" to indicate a guild of philosophers and/or critics who prevent the neophyte from entering their sacred territory: "How shall the uninitiated enter the ground of trained men? It is neither permissible nor possible. The 'Sacred Grove' must remain inviolate to him."\(^{29}\)

Williams completed The Embodiment of Knowledge in 1930, but he never again attempted to compete with Eliot in philosophical terms. When he later returned to continue work on the short "Paterson," the philosopher-protagonist became an ambiguous figure, slightly satiric, and finally disappeared completely. Williams didn't publish another part of his long poem until 1937 when "Paterson: Episode 17" appeared; this fragment had no reference to Mr. Paterson at all and no reference to philosophy. In the decade between the early "Paterson" and this new installment, Williams intensified his search for an American language, published seven more books of prose and poetry, but was still relegated to the sidelines in comparison to Eliot and Pound. During these years, he also saw Hart Crane rise to fame partially by using material he himself had created. Crane attempted to relate America's present to her past before Williams could find either the time to write or a publisher to publish the long poem he knew he must someday complete.
Hart Crane had been a 17-year-old aspiring poet in 1916 when he received a brief handwritten letter from Williams which he later pasted inside the front cover of his copy of Kora in Hell. Seven years later, although Crane was associating with some of the same writers Williams knew, he still had not published his first volume of poems. He had a brief correspondence with Williams in 1923 during which Williams encouraged him in his writing but rejected a poem Crane had submitted for publication in Contact. By 1927, however, Hart Crane was hard at work on his monumental "Myth of America," his long poem entitled The Bridge. Crane had already incorporated several of Williams' techniques and perspectives from In the American Grain into various sections of his poem which were being published in little magazines and he would use even more before he finished his major work.

The white gulls Crane chose as a unifying image for his work could be found in Williams' chapter on Columbus. In "Ave Maria," Crane also had adopted Williams' technique of allowing Columbus to speak for himself, and many of the comments Columbus makes in Crane's poems are adaptations of material presented earlier by Williams. As Williams had done in his chapter on De Soto, Crane selects a woman as "the mythological nature-symbol chosen to represent the physical body of the continent, or the soil." Crane not only found the female symbol in Williams' work but also found the woman herself, Pocahontas. He drew both the
title "Powhatan's Daughter" and his epigraph for Book II from still another chapter of Williams' book. Williams was well aware of these borrowings, and thirty years later, himself a famous poet, could approach them casually when speaking about In the American Grain: "The chapter on De Soto was used by Hart Crane in The Bridge—he took what he wanted, why shouldn't he—that's what writing is for."^4

Williams' attitude toward Crane had not been so generous, however, in 1928 when he was finding few publishing outlets for his own work and still relying on Pound in hopes of getting some recent poems into print. In an August letter to Pound, Williams expresses his fears that The Dial will be sold and that Marianne Moore will retire, thus leaving him with one less outlet for his work. In this letter, Williams also mentions a rival publishing group which includes Crane, and Williams' tone indicates that Crane has moved from the ranks of the unknown to a position of power.

As to the Hart Crane-Josephson group—to hell with them all. There is good there but it's not for me. As it stands, Crane is supposed to be the man that puts me on the shelf. But not only do I find him just as thick-headed as I am myself and quite helplessly verbose at times but that he comes up into clarity far less often. If what he puts on the page is related to design, or thought, or emotion—or anything but disguised sentimentality and sloppy feeling—then I am licked and no one more happy to acknowledge it than myself. I am quite willing that they shall be what they are for there is nothing there that I expect to be caught copying for the next twenty years. To hell with them. But if I can help them, I will. Ha, ha!^35
By 1930, *The Bridge* was published and its reception was far less than what Crane had hoped for; in April of 1932, Crane committed suicide; and in 1933, his close friend Waldo Frank published Crane's *Collected Poems*. This volume received favorable notice and served as the beginning of a reputation that continued to grow through the thirties and forties. During this same period, Williams stubbornly persisted, producing both poetry and prose, but with little celebration from those academic critics who were the arbiters of taste and the makers of literary reputations, critics who termed Crane "one of the most brilliant talents of his generation."\(^{36}\)

While Crane was steadily gaining critical acclaim in the thirties, Williams was gradually being pigeonholed as "one of many fine American poets, a writer of no mean achievement, but of no great stature either."\(^{37}\) His poetry was regarded as different and valuable, but its very differences prompted disfavor when critics compared him to such established poets as Eliot and Pound or even to the rising new star, Crane. Williams' work also continued to appear primarily in small magazines, and his books were generally published in small editions by private presses. Such presses often ran on the borderline of insolvency with little or no money available for promoting new books.

Such was the case with both *A Novelette and Other Prose* (1921-31) and *The Knife of the Times and Other Stories*. The prose was published by a small press operated
by Louis Zukofsky and the short stories by Angel Flores' Dragon Press; the books were neither widely distributed nor carefully reviewed. When another of Zukofsky's publishing ventures, now called the Objectivist Press, produced Williams' Collected Poems: 1921-1931, the book received wider distribution, but many reviewers tempered any praise they might have with unfavorable comparisons to the work of other poets. Blair Rice praised Williams' "clean and spare" poetry which cleared the language of "withered words, stock responses, overripe images and decayed rhythms," but went on to show how Williams' objectivist poetry suffered from excluding too much. He lamented Williams' lack of metaphor and demonstrated how Williams' treatment of old men in a passage from "The Descent of Winter" was inferior to Eliot's treatment of old men in "Gerontion." Babette Deutsch suggested that Williams' "stark and unashamed simplicity of statement" might not be understood by "people accustomed to the passionate imagery of Yeats, to Eliot's suggestive music, to the panoplied mysticism of Hart Crane or the rich allusiveness of Pound." She pointed out how a reader missed "the exultation that comes of a myth-making power" and "the profound excitement... produced by poetry in the tradition of the metaphysical."

Perhaps worst of all was the friendly criticism provoked by Wallace Stevens' preface to the collection. Stevens called Williams a "romantic poet" who had developed a "passion for the anti-poetic" in an attempt to counter
his own innate tendencies toward sentimentalism. Such favorable critics as Conrad Aiken and Marianne Moore, though they praised Williams' work highly, agreed with Stevens and thus cast Williams' work into a mold which would lead to critical distortions and misapprehensions for years to come.

During the thirties, Williams produced more prose than poetry. In both prose and poetry, he frequently portrayed the lives of people he knew. Whereas many critics had been unable to discover the value of his new technical contributions to poetry, some now tended to stress his social sensitivity. This quality endeared him to those who were interested in boosting proletarian causes. His next two small volumes of poems, *An Early Martyr and Other Poems* and *Adam and Eve and the City*, though both published in small editions of 150 copies each, received wide and favorable notice. Much of this acclaim was devoted to poems which sympathetically depicted the plight of the lower classes.

Williams' short stories, too, had a distinctly proletarian flavor, and though he refused to exploit his characters on behalf of political causes, he did write incisively about the lives of the poor patients he visited during his daily rounds as a physician. By 1936, Williams also had begun a novel. He chose the particularly American theme of an immigrant who makes his way in American business and brings two daughters into an environment very much like the part of northern New Jersey Williams worked in and
understood. As an obstetrician and pediatrician, Williams could effectively deal with the delivery of infants and the problems of their early years. By deciding to portray his wife's birth and early years in his novel White Mule, Williams could explore both an area he knew intimately and the socioeconomic forces which operated in the lives of those families where he delivered babies weekly.

An even bigger event than the novel in 1936 was the beginning of Williams' association with James Laughlin, who had recently begun New Directions Publishing Corporation. Laughlin could finally provide Williams with a solvent press and a sympathetic editor who could perceive enough merit in Williams' work to take a chance on long-term profits despite possible short-term deficits. By November of 1936, Williams was writing to Pound that Laughlin had offered to publish White Mule. In the same letter, Williams mentions other writing projects he has completed or is projecting. He speaks of "seven new short poems--two of them as good as anything I've ever done, maybe the best." For the first time in years, he also confides his hopes for a long poem: "And then there's that magnum opus I've always wanted to do: the poem PATERSON. Jeez how I'd like to get at that. I've been sounding myself out in these years working toward a form of some sort..." 40 Williams breaks off in the middle of the sentence to continue his letter with other concerns which may suggest part of the reason he had not yet returned to Paterson. He
admits to his old friend, "I live a very obscure but very complete life in my own petty world," but he also pokes fun at the prestige and public acknowledgement recently accorded Edwin Markham. Both Pound and Williams knew Markham and considered his work inferior and outdated.

Though Williams could still joke with Pound about public taste in poetry, he was not so facetious about commentary from established critics. Not only were his own poems frequently compared unfavorably with those of such literary giants as Pound, Eliot and Crane, but he was either excluded from anthologies of poetry or given slight and condescending attention. Typical of such critical attitudes was Seldon Rodman's 1938 publication, *A New Anthology of Modern Poetry*. In his introduction, Rodman cites Eliot and Pound as responsible for transforming the whole course of modern verse; he also quotes Crane on the necessity of introducing the content of urban life into poetry; he says nothing of Williams. 41 Although Rodman does not speak well of Pound's *Cantos*, he does devote eight pages to Pound's poetry and views Pound's "classic and oriental erudition" and "conversational formalism" as strong influences on other major writers, including Eliot. Rodman uses thirteen pages of Eliot's poetry including "The Hollow Men" and a small selection from *The Rock*. In his biographical sketch of Eliot, he not only mentions the "deathless word magic" of "The Hollow Men" and "Sweeney Among the Nightingales," but he also defends Eliot against the few detractors he has
acquired since his public acceptance of Anglo-Catholicism.
Says Rodman, "His championship of younger talent in The
Criterion, the power of his popular verse-drama, Murder in
the Cathedral are answers enough to those who have prema-
turely written his obituary." Even though Rodman recog-
nizes that Crane has done "only partially successful myth-
making" in The Bridge, he devotes thirteen pages to Crane's
poetry including the entire section of Crane's long poem
entitled "The River."

In contrast to such recognition of Crane, Eliot and
Pound, Rodman includes from Williams' work only a single
poem, "The Yachts." He also mentions that Williams' poems
"Have agitated literary circles for two decades" and cites
"the bird-like lyricism of the usually clipped lines, in
which 'anti-poetic' language is deliberately used to
achieve contrast and new poetic meaning." Rodman was sim-
ply summarizing the type of reception Williams had so long
received from established critics; by the time Rodman's
book appeared, Williams had already partially shifted his
perspective toward his long poem. He had returned to his
early "Paterson" with a vengeance and a taste for satire.
He had turned his philosopher-poet into a joke and had
begun experimenting with parody, parody with satiric impli-
cations toward Eliot.

In what appears to be the earliest draft of a new
start on his long poem, Williams has changed his
philosopher to a ridiculous figure with happy thoughts despite evidence of tragedy which surrounds him.\(^{42}\)

So in his always happy thoughts of a philosopher the details are all tragic.

Also for the first time, in this draft an echo of Eliot's sophisticated "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is incorporated into an episode of Paterson's observations. In Eliot's poem, Prufrock's walk "through certain half-deserted streets" leads him to a confrontation with the lady who makes him question, "Do I dare? and "Do I dare?"

Of course, Prufrock knows he will "turn back and descend the stair" without sexual satisfaction. Williams parodies the situation with a realistic twist which presents the lady's situation had Prufrock found courage to persist. Paterson discovers the lady who has yielded and is now pregnant.

A delirium of solutions forces him into back streets, up hollow stairs in smells to obscene rendezvous and there he finds a festering sweetness of red lollipops and a yelping dog or a great belly that no longer laughs but mourns with its expressionless black navel love's deceit.

By using such references as "back streets," "hollow stairs" and "obscene rendezvous," Williams can evoke both a vague flavor of "Prufrock" and an allusion to "The Hollow Men" with the implication that Eliot's poem is hollow when compared to the reality a doctor faces every day. The passage, with only a few additional words, would appear
immediately following Paterson's expostulation "to drive wit in" in the earliest "Paterson."

Another probable swipe at Eliot occurs in this draft when Paterson visits a convent outside the city which is ". . . the complement exact, at peace/ of the vulgar streets." By treating the monastery, and thus religion, as a quiet complement to the city's ugliness rather than as a solution, Williams indicates that he is not buying into Eliot's answer to modern decadence. As early as January of 1929, Williams knew that Eliot had accepted Anglo-Catholicism.43 The changes were undoubtedly made after that date, and the convent passages would appear with only slight alterations in the later long poem. However, by the time the long poem would be published, Paterson the philosopher would be shifted to Dr. Paterson, a caricature of Williams himself and also a full blown larger-than-life giant competing with other literary giants and representing a city.

Since the draft containing the early satiric swipes at Eliot also contains all the undeleted material from the earliest "Paterson" and none of the references to Paterson as a giant and a city, it can be dated sometime between 1929 and 1939. Sometime within this decade, Williams discovered he was not a philosopher and turned his focus toward satire, an appropriate approach for one who was in his fifties and had still earned only a place at the bottom of the literary ladder.
NOTES

CHAPTER I


5 Williams, Selected Letters, p. 42.

6 Quoted by Paul Mariani, William Carlos Williams: The Poet and His Critics (Chicago: American Library Association, 1975), pp. 4-5.


8 Mariani, pp. 6-7.


10 Pound, Selected Letters, pp. 156-161.

11 Williams, Selected Letters, p. 66.


16 Contact, Jan. 1921, n. pag. Quoted from The Dial and used as filler after "A Matisse" in the second mimeographed issue of Contact.


The isolation of thinking from confrontation with facts encourages that kind of observation which merely accumulates brute facts, which occupies itself laboriously with mere details, but never inquires into their meaning and consequences—a safe occupation, for it never contemplates any use to be made of the observed facts in determining a plan for changing the situation. Thinking which is a method of reconstructing experience treats observation of facts, on the other hand, as the indispensable step of defining the problem, of locating the trouble, of forcing home a definite, instead of a merely vague emotional, sense of what the difficulty is and where it lies. It is not aimless, random, miscellaneous, but purposeful, specific and limited by the character of the trouble undergone. The purpose is so to clarify the disturbed and confused situation that reasonable ways of dealing with it may be suggested.


19 Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, p. 118.


21 Weaver, p. 201.

22 Weaver, pp. 47-50.


24 Whitehead, p. 51.

25 Williams' copy is a 1926 printing by the Macmillan Co. and can be found at Messler Library, Fairleigh Dickinson Univ.


28. Williams, *Selected Letters*, p. 79. Williams wrote to his wife, "Yesterday I finished my philosophy. The last chapters are easy and very fine. They deal with art and manners. If you ever get hold of the book, *Science and the Modern World* (Whitehead) you should read the final chapters."

29. Williams, *The Embodiment of Knowledge*. "Sacred Grove" as priesthood, p. 38; "sacred wood" as guild of philosophers, p. 72; textual quotation, p. 127.


32. Crane, p. 248.


34. Williams, *I Wanted to Write a Poem*, p. 54.


38. Mariani, p. 44.


42 Manuscript in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale Univ. Future references will be identified as Yale manuscripts with titles of manuscript folders when they are available.

43 Letter to Louis Zukofsky, Jan. 29, 1929, Yale. "I heard from McAlmon that T. S. Eliot has turned definitely to Anglo-Catholicism of late."
Satire for William Carlos Williams was a device he encountered and admired in the early twenties while reading Edgar Allan Poe's criticism, but it was also a natural vehicle for his sometimes caustic temperament. It was a technique he first applied in an attempt to differentiate his attitudes toward literature from those of other writers. It was a weapon he turned to in desperation as he saw other writers acclaimed for work he considered useless or even dangerous, a weapon wrapped in allegory which he intended to reveal gradually but then chose to leave hidden when critics focused their praise on other layers of meaning in his poem. The allegory which grew from Williams' impulse toward satire has eluded detection for years. Even now, the full scope of Williams' satire has not been recognized.

Williams' anger at his contemporaries, particularly Pound and Eliot, had been evident as early as the Preface to *Kora in Hell*, but his early confrontations with other writers were polemical rather than satirical. During the first half of the twenties, however, Williams became deeply interested in Poe's works and produced three books, two of which were influenced directly or indirectly by Poe. The
earliest two, *The Great American Novel* and *Spring and All*, are attempts at satire which were published privately in 1923 and received little notice from anyone other than Williams' immediate literary friends.\(^1\) The third, *In the American Grain*, was Williams' first commercial publication.\(^2\) This collection of essays about early Americans received limited but important critical notice. The chapter on Poe illuminates both of the two earlier books and reveals where Williams probably first encountered historic material he would later use for satiric purposes in the long poem *Paterson*. The three books indicate how Williams' satiric impulse was applied, overshadowed, and finally abandoned in the twenties.

In *The Great American Novel*, written in 1921, Williams pokes fun at even the possibility of a truly American novel, for such a novel cannot be written unless a new approach to both writing and American history can be devised. The novel begins as a social and literary satire, but Williams becomes so involved with the solution to the problems he is satirizing that he gives major emphasis to exploring new prose techniques while deemphasizing his satiric thrust. Unable to find even the words to begin his momentous task, the protagonist-author, Williams himself, is constantly reminded that his car more nearly represents the American genius than any characters he might choose. Thus, the car becomes the heroine, and the writer devotes his early descriptive passages to the car while musing on
those problems which prevent the development of a truly indigenous American novel. Williams would remember this twenty-five years later in his autobiography when he called the book "a satire on the novel form in which a little (female) Ford car falls more or less in love with a Mack truck."³

What Williams did not recall was the thinking which conditioned his choice of mechanical characters. Williams had been influenced by a group of writers and thinkers who saw American genius characterized more by business expansion than by human passions. American writers had not been concerned with either the ethical practices of Americans or their cultural roots; they often preferred to imitate foreign works and attempted to graft foreign attitudes on to American subjects. Cars not only depict American business interests, but they serve as more typically American characters than the imitations of European characters which appeared in so many supposedly American novels. The humor and satire in early chapters results from Williams' personification of cars and trucks.

The Great American Novel is full of references to the novel as a particularly European form and the realization that American literature is too bound to foreign countries. Rimbaud, Dostoevski and Joyce parade through Williams' novel with their European approaches which the American novelist cannot use. Their approaches to the novel are unable to penetrate the materialism and crassness Williams
finds around him. He declares himself a "United Stateser," and prefers to wallow in the ugliness of such a denomination rather than submit to the "swarming European consciousness" he sees as a restraint to real American writing.  

In the seventh chapter, Williams finds new territory to explore. He begins to juxtapose events from American history to aspects of contemporary American life. Descriptions of the New World discovered by Columbus and inhabited by hostile Indians are juxtaposed to a single paragraph depicting children discovering a new world among a pile of autumn leaves. This modest beginning is expanded in succeeding chapters as Williams selects varied aspects of American history and inserts them into contemporary material along with memories of his own family background and scenes drawn from his own professional life. His youthful mother's return from Paris to Puerto Rico is juxtaposed to an early story of a search for truth in the Mormon Church. In both, Williams suggests the futility of seeking such an abstract quality as truth through narratives composed in a borrowed language. A doctor's decision not to perform a hysterectomy on a Polish immigrant is juxtaposed to the arrival of new English immigrants who bring their vital strength to America, thus suggesting that new life derives from importing European courage and strong character rather than from importing a European literary heritage. Finally, midway through the book, Williams finds his central theme;
despite the seeming impossibility of the task, he will attempt to discover the essence of his own American culture.

In the remainder of the book, Williams attempts in one way after another to capture various aspects of the American scene, both past and present. He moves from such typically American events and qualities as the circus, jazz, and high-pressure business techniques to brief anecdotes about discoverers like De Soto and statesmen like Lincoln who have made the present possible. He moves from recollections of college days to his present role of obstetrician. Throughout all this searching, Williams questions the value of an imposed tradition, questions Pound directly and Eliot indirectly, and repeats his central theme, the danger of returning to an imposed past at the expense of original work in the present. Rather than turn to Europe, American writers should attempt to find the genius and power of the American past and transfer it to the American present. Only then can any writer even attempt to write the great American novel.

What had begun as satire thus concluded with a new task which Williams himself decided to assume. He soon began working on a series of essays which would eventually become In the American Grain. He also continued to indulge his satiric impulse even as he studied an early American master of satire.
As part of his studies of early Americans who had created the American cultural and literary heritage, Williams read poems, stories and critical essays by Edgar Allen Poe. Nearly a century earlier, Poe, like Williams, had expressed great dissatisfaction with European literary dominance over American writers. Poe's use of polemics and satire in his campaign to free American writing from European tradition was not lost on Williams. Even as he studied the varied works of Poe, Williams wrote the satiric prose for *Spring and All*, a collection of his own poems tied together with a series of statements of his own poetic principles.

*Spring and All*, written during the tidal wave of enthusiasm generated by Eliot's *Waste Land*, was more than a sequel to *Kora in Hell*. It was Williams' first published attempt to articulate his own poetic principles and to oppose them to proclamations from his adversary, Eliot, and practices of his friend Pound. As a work of prose inter-spersed with poetry, it was also Williams' earliest attempt to articulate his approach to poetry in a book containing poems which demonstrate his poetics. Though the book begins with a Dada-like flourish of ridiculous chapter headings and playful typography, these only serve to slightly disguise the derisive humor which pervades the book even after typographical irregularities give way to more straightforward arrangement and the obvious burlesque begins to sound like serious speculation. Throughout the book, Williams manages, by burlesque or parody, to undercut
Eliot's critical pronouncements and opposes them with dicta which offer some basis for his own pragmatically American approach to writing poetry.

Spring and All begins as Williams' answer to critics who have called his poems "positively repellent," who have pointed out their lack of rhyme and rhythm, who have called his work "antipoetry." In answer to those who had unfavorably reviewed such early work as The Tempers, Sour Grapes, Al Que Quierre and Kora in Hell, Williams offers an apostrophe to the imagination. However, he also includes in the chapters which follow an answer to Eliot, a far more important critic who had ignored Williams' work despite their shared friendship with Pound. Williams allows his own imagination to explode as he considers the most radical implications of two popular essays by Eliot: "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and "Hamlet and his Problems." Eliot's theories look idiotic as Williams exaggerates them to the point of caricature. In contrast, Williams spouts his own ideas about what the imagination can do in the modern world, particularly in art, but also for any writer who refuses to be blocked by tradition.

In addition to his somewhat playful prose, Williams intersperses his text with twenty-seven finely crafted poems. Like so many earlier poems which had been denigrated by the critics, these poems speak to the present moment; traditional rhythms and rhymes are replaced by unusual line lengths and stanza variations designed to keep
the reader alert to both the sound and the shape of the poems. Speaking in 1958, Williams recalled that "the poems were kept pure," though he remembered his prose as a "mixture of philosophy and nonsense." His decision to confine the nonsense to prose sections may have been influenced by his readings in Poe, who stood firmly against including blatant humor in serious poetry but who laced his criticism with pungent satire.

Poe's proclivity for spotting foolishness in literary works by his contemporaries probably inspired Williams in his own satiric efforts. Like Poe, Williams combines a mocking attitude with critical common sense, but he also adds his own particular talent for exaggeration. Though he ridicules both Pound and Eliot, it appears to be Eliot's critical work which provokes most of the satiric burlesque.

Williams begins sniping at Eliot as early as page three when he affirms with mock humility, "If I could say what is in my mind in Sanskrit or even Latin I would do so." The Sanskrit reference recalls the closing two lines of uninterpreted Sanskrit in The Waste Land, but by extending the reference to Latin, Williams manages to include Pound and other writers who incorporated foreign quotations as part of their work.

One of Eliot's best known essays in the early twenties was "Tradition and the Individual Talent." In it, Eliot had suggested that the poet must surrender his individual personality in order to better express the feelings and
emotion he wished to convey to his reader through the medium of poetry. Thus, the combination of expressions and experiences which might be most effective in the poem need not be the same as those the poet himself has encountered. Eliot reinforced his critical position toward the poet’s effacement of personality by referring to Indian metaphysical thought:

The point of view which I am struggling to attack is perhaps related to the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul: for my meaning is, that the poet has, not a "personality" to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experience combine in peculiar and unexpected ways.  

Williams, quick to detect the pomposity of a critical principle introduced by way of Indian metaphysics, exaggerates the unity of the soul until it becomes unity of the race of mankind, a unity achieved by apocalypse, total annihilation of man by his fellowmen.

This final and self-inflicted holocaust has been all for love, that together the human race, yellow, black, brown, red and white, agglutinated into one enormous soul may be gratified with the sight and retire to the heaven of heavens, content to rest on its laurels. There, soul of souls, watching its own horrid unity, it boils and digests itself within the tissues of the great Being of Eternity that we shall have become.  

Williams cannot pause with his burlesque of the soul’s unity, however, and continues with his own exaggeration of foreign references as a contrast to the actual objects he celebrates in his poetry:

With what magnificent explosions and odors will not the day be accomplished as we, the Great One among all creatures, shall go about contemplating our self-prohibited desires as we promenade them before the inward review of
our own bowels—et cetera, et cetera, et cetera ... and it is spring—both in Latin and Turkish, in English and Dutch, in Japanese and Italian; it is spring by Stinking River where a magnolia tree, without leaves, before what was once a farmhouse, now a ramshackle home for mill-workers, raises its straggling branches of ivorywhite flowers.

For Williams, unity of the soul seemed a ridiculous apology for an impossible poetic doctrine because a surrender of the poet's individual personality would stifle the imagination. Only an individual can appreciate and grasp the particularity of an object, scene or event, and only the individual artist who has experienced this particularity can pass it on to another. For Williams, a work of the imagination "rouses rather than stupefies the intelligence by demonstrating the importance of personality—"11

Williams continues to undercut Eliot's famous essay on tradition and also takes a sideswipe at Pound's emphasis on the value of a literary past as he speculates that even those who proclaim a new poetry may be too inhibited by their literary backgrounds to effect their purposes after the imaginary apocalypse. Though "ten million billion years" have passed in the imagination, literary evolution repeats itself from the beginning: "A perfect plagiarism results . . . the imagination, drunk with prohibitions, has destroyed and recreated everything afresh in the likeness of that which it was."12 Williams calls those who are responsible for limiting the imagination "THE TRADITION-ALISTS OF PLAGIARISM" because "they seize those nearest
them and shout into their ears: Tradition! The solidarity of life!"  

Although plagiarism may have seemed a strong term to apply to Pound and Eliot, Williams was not the first disaffected American writer to make such an accusation about his better-known compatriots. Nearly a century earlier, Poe had demonstrated Longfellow's imitations of lesser known writers and had carried on a long battle with an anonymous critic who defended Longfellow. In an article entitled "Mr. Longfellow and Other Plagiarists," Poe not only defined plagiarism but showed how and why writers who read widely are apt to be plagiarists. Although he admitted the possibility of accidental plagiarism, he also excoriated those who knew what they were doing and gave no credit to the sources from which they drew. "Of the class of willful plagiarists nine out of ten are authors of established reputation, who plunder recondite, neglected or forgotten books."  

Williams, in Spring and All, suggests that the truly imaginative artist or writer can break with tradition to avoid both accidental and intended plagiarism. In opposition to traditionalism in art, Williams offers examples of artists such as Charles Demuth and Juan Gris. These artists are able to do more than copy nature or make pictures. Demuth sees design as "a function of the IMAGINATION" and Gris, who is able to "separate things of the imagination
from life," can combine forms which are common to all men into new compositions which suggest a new reality. In each case the reality must be that of the artist which he is expressing in his own particular way. For Williams, "the artist does exactly what every eye must do with life, fix the particular with the universality of his own personality." 15

Williams cites Poe as a writer from the past who also escapes plagiarism through his "close identity with life," and particularly through a sensitivity to the constrictions of a provincial literary atmosphere. "Poe could not have written a word without the violence of explosive emotion combined with the indriving force of a crudely repressive environment." 16 Williams neglects to add that he had chosen to remain in just such a repressive environment and that, like Poe, he is struggling to come to terms with the life around him.

Williams again moves antithetical to Eliot's well-known criticism when he chooses Shakespeare as the past writer who most completely illustrates an individual imagination at work in relation to the world about him. In an essay entitled "Hamlet and His Problems," Eliot had cited Hamlet as Shakespeare's artistic failure partially to present his own theory of the "objective correlative." According to Eliot:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which
shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.\textsuperscript{17}

Shakespeare had failed to find an objective correlative sufficient to justify Hamlet's near madness because Shakespeare did not and could not understand Hamlet's feelings toward his guilty mother. It logically followed that what he did not understand himself, he could not embody in a plot handed down to him by other writers. Eliot sees the repetition of phrase and puns in \textit{Hamlet} as "the buffoonery of an emotion" which Hamlet is unable to act out because Shakespeare is unable to express it in art.

In refutation of Eliot, though he does not mention Eliot's name, Williams declares that Shakespeare's "actual power was PURELY of the imagination" and that he could compete with more learned fellow writers only through the perfection of his work: "—his buoyancy of imagination raised him NOT TO COPY them, not to holding the mirror up to them but to equal, to surpass them as a creator of knowledge, as a vigorous, living force above their heads."\textsuperscript{18} By stressing Shakespeare as a living force who drew his characters from the knowledge of life around him, Williams suggests that Shakespeare did not need to understand fully a set of artistic assumptions because he was able to understand people, precisely the opposite of Eliot's position. Without engaging Eliot in a discussion of Hamlet's emotional causation, Williams simply asserts that \textit{Hamlet} was written
about at the middle of Shakespeare's life. The implication may well be that Shakespeare, at mid-life, could understand far more than Eliot in his twenties, when he had written his essay on [Hamlet]. Furthermore, asserts Williams, "the objects of his [Shakespeare's] world were real to him because he could use them and use them with understanding to make his inventions--" Shakespeare did not need to select a set of objects or experiences to match or become the equivalent of an emotion; rather, he made all objects real through the power of his imagination.

Up to this point, Williams' representation of Shakespeare has been free of any reference at all to Eliot; however, Williams cannot resist imitating Eliot even as he excoriates modern critics. He parodies Eliot's precise use of obscure words and highly allusive language to suggest the worm-eaten sophistries by which critics try to categorize Shakespeare's imaginative abilities by reducing them to clear-cut aesthetic laws: "The vermiculations of modern criticism of S. particularly amuse when the attempt is made to force the role of a Solon upon the creator of Richard 3d." 19 Williams calls, instead, for a new kind of critical imagination which can reappreciate the work of imagination in the classics. He ignores the fact that Pound and Eliot, each in his own way, had also attempted to revivify tradition in contemporary terms.
Throughout the book, Williams offers the imagination and its applications in art as a substitute for tradition and any rules which other writers or critics might attempt to derive from tradition. Though the refutation of tradition consists mainly of burlesque and parody with a satiric purpose, *Spring and All* escapes the obvious polemicism of the Prologue to *Kora in Hell*. Williams mentions neither Eliot nor Pound but manages to suggest that Pound's proclamation to make poetry new has resulted in imitation rather than in creative invention.

The major problem with this early exercise in satire is that Williams had no really solid critical theory of his own with which to oppose Eliot and Pound. He could demonstrate in his poems the kind of newness he sought, but he could not yet articulate a poetics which might justify his experiments. He could see weak points in Eliot's criticism, some of which would later embarrass Eliot himself, but he could not separate the weaknesses from the major thrust of Eliot's critical work. He was thus guilty of a literary fault which Poe had called "indiscriminate censure," the sin of attacking the true with the false. Furthermore, the satiric impulse which prompted the prose sections was frequently lost in Williams' enthusiasm for moving rapidly from one subject to another, from literature to art, and back again. Only when *Spring and All* is read in tandem with Eliot's essays can the burlesque and caricature
be seen, and no one has yet read these early works of Eliot and Williams together.

Williams, himself, thirty years later, would say of the prose in *Spring and All*, "It made sense to me, at least to my disturbed mind—because it was disturbed at that time—but I doubt if it made sense to anyone else." In his *Autobiography*, Williams would identify the period immediately following publication of *The Waste Land* as a time when his hopes for a revolution in American poetry seemed totally demolished by Eliot's brilliance. He would also later remember both *The Great American Novel* and *Spring and All* as "travesties," the earlier a travesty on "conventional American writing" and the latter a travesty on "typographical form." Both books, however, can be viewed as Williams' own exploration of his developing poetics, experiments begun in retaliation to the growing body of literary theory produced by Eliot and Pound, experiments in clearing away critical obstructions by ridicule and discovering those peculiarly American elements which must be included in American literature.

Part of Williams' program to discover his own American culture was his reappraisal of heroes from American history, the series of essays which appeared in 1925 entitled *In the American Grain*. These essays distinguish between two types of European discoverers and settlers who came to the new world: those who destroyed indigenous values by imposing their old world ways and those who adapted
themselves and their talents to the raw new wilderness and sought to learn from the established native population. Many of Williams' essays include direct quotations from diaries and journals or Williams' attempt to duplicate the language and spirit of the characters and situations depicted. Significantly, Williams chose Poe as the American writer who most thoroughly grasped American realities and who first recognized the necessity for a national literature. Although he added a one-page sketch of Lincoln at the request of his publishers, his long chapter on Poe had originally been planned as the final chapter.

One astonishing feature of Williams' chapter on Poe is his emphasis; he devotes about two-thirds of his space to Poe's criticism and only a third to the combined tales, poems and biography which other writers had so frequently analyzed, studied and criticized. Use of material and quotations from at least sixteen different critical essays by Poe indicates that Williams thoroughly familiarized himself with Poe's critical writings and was therefore fully acquainted with the satiric edge to Poe's criticism.

Much of Williams' essay on Poe is devoted to establishing Poe as "a genius intimately shaped by his locality and time." This emphasis on localism is closely related to the early poem "Paterson," and to Williams' early interest in localism as described by Dewey. At one point, Williams actually characterizes Poe in precisely the same terms he had discovered in Dewey: "What he [Poe] says,
being thoroughly local in origin, has some chance of being universal in application . . . " At still another point, Williams stresses not only Poe's localism but also his use of language: "The language of his essays is a remarkable HISTORY of the locality he springs from." Williams further indicates that Poe's language "seems to fall back continuously to a bare surface exhausted by having reached no perch in tradition." Almost certainly, this is a veiled reference to Eliot's championship of tradition in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," the essay Williams had attacked with such fervor in Spring and All. Even in such a serious study as In the American Grain, Williams couldn't resist a slight sideswipe at his old antagonist, Eliot. Of more importance, Williams had found in Poe a prototype for himself and his efforts to disengage American literature from European, and particularly British, influence. Thus, he needed to view Poe as an artist who embraced localism as a part of his artistic method. By casting his lot with Poe, Williams was emphatically dissociating himself from both Eliot and Pound.

A lesser, but perhaps more significant, emphasis in the Poe chapter is Williams' awareness of Poe's critical attitude toward American satirical writing. Williams quotes from at least two of Poe's essays which center on satire and probably read a third. He was thus acquainted with Poe's attitude toward appropriate and inappropriate ways of using satire. These views are important because
they may have been responsible for Williams' initial shying away from the use of satire in his short "Paterson" even though he was psychologically attracted to the genre.

Poe commented on satire as a literary form in his essay on James Russell Lowell, a portion of which Williams quotes in the Poe chapter. The primary quality for effective satire, according to Poe, is sarcasm, but it must be used with a detachment which "appears to be the genial, good-humored outpouring of irrepressible merriment." Though justifiable malevolence may be at the root of satire, it must not show. Poe maintains that Lowell cannot handle such detachment and has written his "Fable for Critics" as an overly passionate counterattack on critics who have written unfavorably about his work. Poe also maintains that Lowell does no more than imitate Lord Byron, who, when similarly assailed, had written his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." Lowell therefore commits the two greatest errors Poe finds in American satirical writing: excessive emotional involvement and imitation rather than originality.

Williams probably paid careful attention to Poe's commentary. Burlesque, parody and satire in both Spring and All and The Great American Novel are far enough removed from excessive emotional involvement that they have gone almost unnoticed by critics. Nor could either book be seen as an imitation of foreign models. Indeed, the two books have been mainly ignored or at best, classified as early
experiments. The brief thrust at Pound in Williams' early "Paterson" also suggests both an attempt at the good-humored approach for which Poe argued and restraint, for Williams concludes his section on wit and the Pope with a single line: "So in his high decorum he is wise."

Williams' early sense of decorum seems to have been mainly conditioned by Poe.

Poe also stood firmly against the inclusion of satire with serious poetry. Such had been Thomas Ward's crime in his collection of poems entitled "Passaic, a Group of Poems Touching that River." Though Williams quotes only a single sentence from Poe's essay on Ward, the essay must have interested him greatly, for it introduced him to a collection of poems he had already celebrated in his own early poem "The Wanderer" and to Sam Patch, a character he would later highlight in his own long poem about the Passaic River.²⁵ Poe objected to Ward's poetic treatment of Patch's jump down the Passaic River falls and called Ward's work a burlesque rather than a serious poem.

Regarding another poem in the series, Poe lamented the inclusion of personal memoirs which Ward maintained he had "transplanted in the richer soil of verse." Suggesting that the transplanting "by no means agreed with its constitution," Poe considered whether the memoirs should not have been preferable in their original prose form. Though unnamed, the heroine of these memoirs is Mrs. Cumming, who, along with Patch, would be presented in prose sections of
the long poem Paterson. These prose sections would, as Poe had suggested, be left in their original prose forms but with a slight exception. Williams would alter the prose just enough to suit his satiric purposes.

A third essay by Poe which Williams probably read but did not quote was Poe's review of "The Quacks of Helicon—a Satire." Though Poe agreed with the author's contention that prominent literati of the day achieved distinction more by chicanery than by talent, he exposed the author's poetic technique as an imitation of Pope, Dryden, Rochester and Swift. He also accused Wilmer of "indiscriminate censure." Before Williams would attempt any major satiric effort, he needed to determine precisely what he would attack and what he would defend. He also needed to know more about satire as a form. During the two decades after he wrote his chapter on Poe, Williams added to his library and read not only those satirists mentioned by Poe, but also other noted satirists from diverse periods and languages. When he emerged from this study, he was ready to violate Poe's sense of decorum by including satiric material in his serious long poem.

Williams' renewed interest in satire peaked during the late thirties and early forties, those years preceding publication of Paterson, Book One. By 1936, with the help of his invalid mother who lived with his family, Williams had begun translating from the Spanish El Perro y la Calentura, a satire by Quevedo. Whether the translation of
Quevedo's book prompted Williams to renew his early interest in satire or his interest in satire prompted his translation of Quevedo, Williams began to take a new and deeper look into satire. The date May 11, 1937, and Williams' signature inscribed in Volume One of *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift* probably indicate either the date Williams acquired the volume or the time he was reading it. A 1936 copyright date in the Modern Library edition of Williams' *Complete Works of Horace* suggests that he also could have been reading Horace in the late thirties. Williams' library also contained two copies of *The Satyricon* by Petronius Arbiter, the 1929 Modern Library edition and a 1930 translation ascribed to Oscar Wilde. Whether Williams was reading this work in the late thirties cannot be ascertained, but two details regarding *The Satyricon* suggest a relationship to Williams' thinking about literature and his preparation for *Paterson* in the late thirties and early forties.

Although *The Satyricon* is a novel of adventure, it is also "a vehicle for exposing the false taste which prevailed upon all matters connected with literature and the fine arts." Like *Paterson*, *The Satyricon* is a combination of prose and poetry. However, while *Paterson* is a long poem interspersed with prose, *The Satyricon* is a long prose work interspersed with "many brilliant fragments of verse, mostly parodies and burlesques, some ludicrous, some beautiful." In 1939, Williams was working steadily on a
collection of poems and speech fragments entitled "Detail and Parody for the Poem Paterson." Although only one small poem from this manuscript would ever reach the long poem, Williams seems to have tried for a time to produce poems in the spirit of The Satyricon.

Not only was Williams studying satiric works in the late thirties and early forties; he also was becoming more and more disillusioned with his own position in literary affairs. As Williams coordinated the various materials he had collected for years toward his long poem, he began to see the place for a satiric level in his major work. His letters, at least one essay, and an early outline of the long poem indicate that Williams was beginning to combine his studies in satire with his feelings of anger toward Pound, Eliot and Crane.

Williams' letters to James Laughlin, who became a friend as well as a publisher, provide the best reflection of his developing attitudes toward both Pound and Eliot. Williams' feelings toward Pound were often ambivalent, a mixture of admiration, disgust and pity interrelated to his anger at Pound's support of Mussolini on the eve of World War II. His dislike of Eliot, however, was clear-cut. Except for recognizing Eliot as a skillful fellow-poet, Williams had only antagonism and distrust for him and resented Laughlin's praise for and defense of this literary enemy.
Though some of Williams' contentions with Pound grew from his earliest associations with Pound as an overbearing mentor, feelings about Pound's often unwarranted self-assurance were exacerbated by Pound's espousal of Fascism. In February of 1939, Williams wrote Laughlin that he was "fed up on the man" and refused "to write him or answer his letters while he stands up for the son of a bitch who sends his son to bomb civilians just for the fun of it."[^33] Two months later when Williams learned by rumor that Pound might be visiting the United States, Williams commented to Laughlin that a visit from Pound was "one of the surest signs of the approaching war . . ." and added, "I hope he does keep his trap shut if he's for the murderous gang he says he's for."[^34]

When Pound did finally visit the United States in June in an unsuccessful attempt to right the political wrongs in Washington, he spent a night at Williams' home, and Williams relented. He admitted to Laughlin, "I like him immensely as always, he is inspiring and has much information to impart . . ." However, Williams also was forced to conclude, "The man is sunk, in my opinion, unless he can shake the fog of Fascism out of his brain during the next few years which I seriously doubt that he can do."[^35]

Again in 1940, when Williams had received Pound's Chinese Cantos, he found himself both angry and relenting. After railing about Pound's lack of knowledge concerning
the Chinese, about him being tone deaf and a misplaced romantic, Williams admitted:

But in spite of it all he's a good poet. I had to acknowledge it as I read along in that Chinese abaca frame of his enumerating verse. It had charm, it had sweep, it had even childish innocence written all over it. He thinks he's being terribly profound, frowningly serious and all he's doing is building blocks and it's lovely. He hasn't the least idea where he hits true and where he falls flat, he wants to be praised for one thing and he contradicts himself upon the same count in the next paragraph. He's got to be loved to be praised, as one loves a Mongoloid idiot, for his sweet character.36

The very next day, Williams was again praising Pound to Laughlin as "a master of the language," and was suggesting only one other contemporary who could compare to Pound.

All that is necessary to feel Pound's excellence in this use of language is to read the work of others—from among whom I particularly and prominently exclude E. E. Cummings. In the use of language Pound and Cummings are beyond doubt the two most distinguished American poets of today. It is the bringing over of the language of the day to the serious purposes of the poet that is the difficult thing. Both these men have evolved that ability to a high degree.37

By December, however, Williams was again feeling alienated from Pound. By then, too, he was measuring himself against his old friend.

Ezra is an important poet, we must forgive him his stupidities, I do, no matter how much he riles me. But I prefer not to have to do with him in any way. He wants to patronize me. Don't tell me this isn't so for I know better. His letters are insults, the mewings of an 8th grade teacher. That's where he thinks I exist in relation to his catastrophic knowledge of affairs, his blinding judgments of contemporary values. In one sense he is quite right to protect himself as he does. But my perceptions overtook him twenty years ago—not however my accomplishments. When I have finished, if I can go on to the finish, there'll be another measuring.38
In 1939 and 1940, Williams was also feeling that Eliot had somehow thwarted the kind of breakthrough Williams was trying to make in his own poetry. He replied to Laughlin's admiration of Eliot with a scathing attack on Eliot's poetry.

I'm glad you like his verse but I'm warning you, the only reason it doesn't smell is that it's synthetic. Maybe I'm wrong but I distrust that bastard more than any writer I know in the world today. He can write, granted. But—it's like walking into church to me. I can't do it without a bad feeling at the pit of my stomach: nothing has been learned there since the simplicities were prevented from becoming multiform by an arrest of growth—Birdseye Foods, suddenly frozen at 50 degrees below zero under pressure at perfect maturity, immediately after being picked from the caves. It's pathological with me perhaps, I hope not but I am infuriated because the arrest has taken place just at the point of risk, just at the point when the magnificence might (possibly) have happened, just when the danger threatened, just when the transition might, just might have led to the difficult new thing. But the God-damned liars prefer Popes, prefer "order" prefer freezing—prefer, if you use the image, the sterilization of the Christ they profess. And the result is canned to make literature, with all the flavor, with all the pomp—while the real thing rots under their noses and they duck to the other side of the street. I despise and detest them. They are like moles on a pig's belly instead of tits—Christ, how I hate their guts. And the more so because Eliot, like his monumental wooded throne on wheels that he carries around with him to worship—Eliot takes the place of the realizable actual which is that much held back from realization by precisely his existence.39

This vitriolic explosion from Williams undoubtedly brought a reply from Laughlin in defense of Eliot, for less than two weeks later, Williams was writing again, this time lumping Pound in with Eliot and probably seeing himself as one of the imaginative artists held back because of Pound's and Eliot's adherence to a literary tradition.
Of course I recognize Eliot as a noteworthy artist, and of course I know and recognize the literature that stems from and is parcel of the tradition of literature purely. It may be great and properly directed is great. Perhaps Eliot is great.

On the other hand I say and believe that all that is implied above is secondary to something else, something hot from the blood that, at its best, uses the traditional literary and makes the great masterpieces of the world. It is this latter that is likely to be displaced and forgotten by the former.

My objections to the collegiate sons of bitches to whom Eliot and Pound, at their worst, play the pimp is that they tend to elevate the first category against the second. The second is trackless and enormously difficult. It is always under the great handicap of monumental invention for its contents and form. But the pimps of literature seize the position due great imagination and all its prerogatives and puff themselves up at the true artist.

The Pounds and the Eliots—Pound less than Eliot—have no eye for the artist in the sense that I outline him above. They do not make themselves, as they should, his abettor. They want to tell him, right enough, but not to serve him. They place themselves and their kind at the peak displacing their betters—their less skilled betters but their betters.

On a less personal level, Williams also expressed his dissatisfactions with both Eliot and Pound in a 1938 essay entitled "Against the Weather: A Study of the Artist." In this three-part assessment of those conditions necessary for the production of great art, Williams first defines the artist's task, then illustrates and expands his definition with reference to Dante and the Spanish Archpriest of Hita, and finally applies the expanded definition to his own era. Williams views the work an artist has to do as "the most important creation of civilization," for Williams believes
the artist's creation can both define and change life. However, each artist must find "the universality of the local" if he is to depict his own world in terms which others will be able to feel and understand.

Two masterworks which contain differing approaches to their local worlds are Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the Spanish Archpriest's *Book of Love*. Though earthly and heavenly love are the themes of both books, Williams judges that Dante restricts while the Archpriest expands. Dante's work appears to be limited by dogmatism in both subject and structure. The more loosely knit Spanish epic approaches the universal condition of man more closely because the mingling of Moslem, Christian and Jew in Spain provided a broader perspective for its author. "The Archpriest, freed by geography from the dominance of Christian dogma, was closer to the artist of today than the abler Florentine." Williams would design his own long poem more in relation to the *Book of Love* than to the more structured *Divine Comedy*.

In the third section, Williams attempts to apply his criteria for the artist to present day writers. In keeping with the position he has long defended, he speaks first of the necessity of America to be free from Europe. However, he also sees the artist "under attack by various parties against the whole." One of these parties is political, and although he does not actually name Pound, Pound is included when Williams excoriates England for her failure to support the Spanish loyalists in the Spanish Civil War.
The second party, both literary and religious, would restrict the free verse forms for which Whitman had fought and would view the world's problems in a religious perspective. Williams calls this party "the new Anglo-Catholicism," and its chief proponent is no doubt his old antagonist Eliot. To this group, "Nothing can be simply beautiful, it must be so beautiful that no one can understand it except by the assistance of the cult. It must be a 'mystery'." The final party is economic, and again Pound's social credit theories and his Fascist leanings appear to influence Williams' comments, but it is unclear in this essay exactly where Williams stands in relation to the economic aspect of Pound's work.

Without mentioning either Pound or Eliot by name, Williams hammers away at the partialness of any single theory which distracts the artist from his major task of discovering a new structure which can present life whole rather than in part.

We should have a revolution of some sort in America every ten years. The truth has to be redressed, re-examined, re-affirmed in a new mode. There has to be new poetry. But the thing is that the change, the greater material, the altered structure of the inevitable revolution must be in the poem, in it. Made of it. It must shine in the structural body of it.

At this time, Williams must surely have been thinking of his own purposes in *Paterson*. However, he also maintains, "... it is the artist's business to call attention to the imbecilities, the imperfections, the partialities as well as the excellence of his time." The implication
that both Pound and Eliot have turned to partialities and have thus deserted America underlies the entire third section of the essay. While Williams was maintaining the need to find a new form for his own era, he was also beginning to feel a need to portray the imbecilities and imperfections of his compatriots.

Sometime during 1939 and 1940, Williams outlined the four books of his major poem. The outline was pasted to the backs of four manila envelopes, each of which was stuffed with material which might be used in Paterson. One of the main elements of the poem at this time would concern the search for a language, a search for form, a search to be made by Paterson, the hero of Williams' 1927 poem. Several items in the outline, however, suggest that Williams will deal with topics closely associated with Eliot and Pound. In retrospect, Williams appears to have planned a poem which points out Pound's and Eliot's imbecilities even as it celebrates the local area and challenges Crane's romantic "Myth of America." Although some content originally planned for one book might eventually appear in a different book, Williams already had selected some of the material he would use satirically. Book titles also suggest the direction his literary allegory would take.

Book One, entitled "The Delineaments of the Giants" would "Include various notes, somewhat in full on Patch (his acts)" and "Mrs. Cumming, personal notes." By this
date, Williams probably conceived of his giants as representative literary figures as well as local historic figures and mythical representatives of the man-city and female-mountain. The stories of Patch and Mrs. Cumming would depict not only their sensational leaps over the falls but also a plunge of three major poets into the stream of language. Pound, Cummings and Williams himself would be the literary giants represented in Williams' historic fragments. Another direction in the outline reminded Williams to "Cut the long early 'Paterson' bit to sharper figures." This indicates that Williams already had lengthened his early poem and added the material parodying Eliot's "Prufrock." The final entry on the outline confirms this suspicion: "End with the monastery in the country as compensation or correlation to the city and its draggle."

Plans for the next book suggest still a more pointed thrust at Eliot. In his religious drama The Rock, Eliot had presented in dramatic form an argument for building a new church in London. The opening chorus may well have suggested the setting and title for Williams' second book.

I journeyed to London, to the timekept City, Where the River flows, with foreign flotations. There I was told: we have too many churches, And too few chop-houses. There I was told: Let the vicars retire. Men do not need the Church In the place where they work, but where they spend their Sundays. In the City, we need no bells: Let them waken the suburbs.
I journeyed to the suburbs, and there I was told:
We toil for six days, on the seventh we must motor
To Hindhead, or Maidenhead.
If the weather is foul we stay at home and read the
papers.
In industrial districts, there I was told
Of economic laws.
In the pleasant countryside, there it seemed
That the country now is only fit for picnics.
And the Church does not seem to be wanted
In country or in suburbs; and in the town
Only for important weddings.

"Sunday in the Park," the title for Williams' second
book, provides the setting for a direct demonstration of
how Sundays are actually spent in Paterson. Eliot's drama­
tic preaching in The Rock will be undercut by scenes of
Sunday picnickers enjoying their day in the park. One
scene will focus on Italian immigrants who relish their
wine and are called in this early outline "wops on the
rocks." A reference to "Silenus" suggests that the wine
drinking will be associated with the Greek satyr who was a
companion to Dionysus. Though Silenus does not actually
get into Paterson, the drinking scene in Book Two embodies
the bacchanalian spirit Williams probably intended.
Eliot's religious position will be associated with an
American evangelist, who in these early notes is identified
simply as "the Preacher--moral rumblings." Along with
these apparently satiric plans, Williams sketches in his
central theme of the poet's quest for a language: "the roar
of the falls: the 'language.' Trying to decipher it." The
final notation for the book indicates that the hero,
Paterson, "flees to the library."
"The Library," as title for Book Three, indicates Williams' earliest plans to satirize excessive erudition which blocks the discovery of a living language. Williams outlines Paterson's continuing search: "He seeks an interpretation of the Falls—that obsesses him—in reading, in books—but finds it not in the books but in his mind that wanders as he reads." Both Pound and Eliot were known as book poets; Williams, however, wanted to focus on "the mind and body as it listens for language" in the life and concerns of his people. Other notes for Book Three suggest that Williams probably intended to challenge both Pound and Eliot by handling topics which they had touched on in their best known works. Williams intended to include "the history of SUM," a presentation of Alexander Hamilton's economic plan for Paterson. The SUM material almost certainly relates to Pound's Cantos 31 through 34 in which Pound uses letters from Thomas Jefferson and John Adams to depict an early American government concerned with economic growth. Williams also intended to include "First mention of 2 murders—Van Winkle (for money) Adriance (etc.) give notes, first mention of both, fairly full, but not the outcome of either." The murders were probably intended to counter Eliot's symbolic and psychological approach to murder in his 1935 play Murder in the Cathedral. Both the SUM material and the Van Winkle murder would later be moved to Book Two although the satiric purpose of the murder would not be revealed until Book Four.
Book Four, in these early notes, was to be entitled "The River," and Williams had qualified his title by adding "(as it courses to the sea)." The title would later appear as "The Run to the Sea." The early title, however, may well have been associated in Williams' mind with Crane's use of "The River" as a major section of *The Bridge*, especially since Williams also noted plans to develop "the flow of factual history." "Factual" is the key word to indicate that Williams' history would have little in common with the mythic quality of history presented in Crane's poem. When Williams did finally include factual history, it was linked to his satiric windup of Eliot's portrait rather than to Crane and was included in the section originally planned as "the river of blood (which is the actual of that symbol)" and the conclusion of murders Williams had introduced earlier.

It is difficult to say how much or how little satire Williams planned when he first sketched out the four books of his poem. Four or five years would elapse before he could prepare even the first book for publication. During these years the poem would grow both in content and intent. In January of 1942 Williams appeared to be deemphasizing his attempts to satirize Eliot, perhaps through discouragement with his practice exercises in this direction. He wrote to Laughlin, "There's one guy [Eliot] who ought to be saddled and ridden by somebody who could put him to good
use. Wish I could do it but I ain't the one for it, more's the pity.  

Though Williams may have experienced some trouble with the satiric level of his poem, he was beginning to see numerous applications of the historic material he had been collecting about the Paterson falls. He was also exploring ways he might use the falls to represent an unintelligible flow of language. By summer of 1942, he was enthusiastically "digging up" materials which he told Laughlin provided "a theme for everything I've got and more." Yet he was still unable to pull together the strands of his poem. By December, he complained, "I am burned up to do it but don't quite know how. I write and destroy, write and destroy. It is all shaped up in outline and intent. The body of the thinking is finished but the technique and manner and the method are unresolvable to date. I flounder and flunk . . ."  

Williams had not forgotten about his satiric intent; he was, in fact, now relating his satire to conditions and attitudes which prevented important new literary work and failed to interpret the real world. In January of 1943, he announced to Laughlin the contemporary importance of his project.

*Paterson*, I know is crying to be written, the time demands it, it has to do just with all the peace movements, the plans for international infiltration into the dry mass of those principles of knowledge and culture which the universities and their cripples have cloistered and made a cult. It is the debasing, the keg
cracking assault upon the cults and the kind of thought that destroyed Pound and made what it has made of Eliot.54

By the summer of 1943, Pound's destruction was more fact than speculation; he had been indicted for treason. Once again, Williams was torn between his admiration of Pound's "genius for words" and his anger at being implicated in Pound's difficulties. Fearful that he would be called by the FBI to testify as a witness against Pound, Williams wondered what to do. He knew Pound was no traitor, but he believed Pound partially deserved the condemnation he was receiving. In late August, he wrote to Laughlin:

I'd do much to spare Ezra the full brunt of the lashing that is coming to him. He's a poet and a poet should have special consideration--I agree with you there. Ezra is a genius, some of his lines are superb, unmatched in our verse. He is besides an old stupid friend--but there are limits beyond which I would not go for him.55

Though Williams did not actually need to testify against his old friend, the conflicting feelings of anger and pity would linger for several years, the very years Williams was bringing Books One and Two of Paterson to completion.

During 1944, when Williams was working steadily on the Introduction to Paterson and assembling the parts for Book One, he also suggested that Laughlin publish the satire by Quevedo which he and his mother had translated. While researching Quevedo's background at the New York Public Library, Williams discovered an early translation by an Englishman who, he confided to Laughlin, had "missed the
entire point of the whole book, its double-entendre." By 1944, Williams evidently considered double entendre as the best approach to his own satiric impulse. Probably through working with Quevedo, Williams had begun to see a way to include both the serious and satiric purposes of his poem. By carefully selecting and editing the large body of material he had collected and written, he could stress local events, both state and demonstrate his own poetics, yet simultaneously develop a literary allegory. He could interweave the story of his own life and his city with parodies, puns and satiric passages embedded in a factual presentation of his local area. Like Quevedo, he could both reveal and conceal his frustrations by becoming a master of double entendre.

After Book One had gone to the printer and while Williams was struggling to complete Book Two, he stepped up his campaign to get Laughlin to publish the Spanish satire. In July of 1945, he described the book to Laughlin as "far more 'modern' than ever Hemingway or even Gertie [Stein] ever thought of being" and as "absolutely 'new directions' in its manner of writing and hot as hell besides." Laughlin agreed to look at the manuscript, so Williams sent it off noting in a letter that there was "an essay on Quevedo to go with it—if desired." When Laughlin questioned Williams on the meaning of Quevedo's work, Williams replied that the manuscript was "the first recorded use of the pure image to tell a story." Because the story
involved a young girl's pregnancy caused by a high church dignitary, Quevedo had been forced to describe the story in "double talk" by "using parables, popular sayings, slang, anything he could lay his hands on."59 Laughlin decided not to publish the book and didn't see Williams' essay until May of 1949 when Williams expanded the essay and again requested publication of the satire. This time Williams suggested his essay be run side by side with the text. He also reiterated that Quevedo’s experimental mood "is no more difficult than Joyce or Pound or even Gertrude" and "is, in fact, a forerunner of the styles in all of those books in some part."60 Williams also must have hoped Laughlin would see Quevedo's style in some part as a forerunner of Paterson, for his Book Three drafts composed in 1948 and early 1949 contained the following passage:

(At least these are the words I prefer or as Quevedo said: Like this you should never write--and went on from there)61

Despite Williams' accompanying essay, Laughlin again refused to publish the satire, and Williams didn't include his passage on Quevedo in either Book Three or Book Four. His essay, however, is preserved in manuscript and gives a good indication of how Williams' work on Quevedo had affected his own poem Paterson.62
The essay opens with Williams' explanation of Quevedo's reasons for writing in terms which only a few of the quick-witted could understand.

Dog and fever, what more natural to us? We're dogs, all of us, at our best and worst if the fever hasn't got us, all. Then let us find other means to hide it than our present one, for its sweat reeks from us. Quevedo was in exile for having killed a man at the entrance to the cathedral, for having kicked a lady at her prayers on the stones. He was embittered at the treatment he had received and walking about impotent on his country estate to which he was confined, began to write.

The fever had him and he was boiling over. For he if anyone, knew the intrigues of the court as he knew only too well that others in high positions were profiting by his absence. But his enemies were not ordinary enemies, they occupied high positions, the chief of them a high church man. To attack such a man required subtlety, double talk.

Quevedo was a man for double talk so he sat down at his novella and let fly.

When Book One of Paterson was published, Williams was not a man in exile. He was, however, an accomplished poet who, as recently as the previous year, had been omitted from Conrad Aiken's major collection of poems for the Modern Library. Furthermore, his archenemy was a respected member of the Anglican Church and one of the most highly respected poets on both sides of the Atlantic. Laughlin, Williams' own publisher, was even an acknowledged fan of Eliot's. Williams' other sometimes antagonist and sometimes friend, Pound, was in nearby St. Elizabeth's Hospital, an adjudged eccentric thought mentally unfit to stand trial for treason. Certainly, Williams could not
ridicule either Pound or Eliot openly in his long poem. Like Quevedo, he needed to resort to a kind of double-talk. In his essay Williams reveals one of Quevedo's techniques of making lists "put down without comment other than the facts of which they speak." The technique fascinated Williams, who saw it as "almost contemporary in its literary method! No comment, nothing 'about' the subject, a bare placing of the matter before the attention, as an object, that which with wit, a man might see for himself—swiftly and to the point. The list is loaded with Quevedo's contempt." Williams would also include objects in Paterson, scraps from history and from letters which would conceal a contempt for other literary figures and for patterns of thought Williams believed were dangerous for a democratic society.

Williams also saw in Quevedo the need for the satirist to place himself in the same position as those he satirized. Thus, Williams would characterize his own poem as "just another dog/ among a lot of dogs," would depict himself as a giant among other literary giants and would close his original poem with a clownish "final somersault." In his essay, he wrote, "Quevedo descends to the level—a pure literary device—of those he attacks. He has come to his climax, the point he would make, the climax of his scurrilities and of his story—his deliberate scurrility as a gossip and an inspired clown." Years later in interviews,
Williams would also speak of the "scandal" he included in the documentary sections of *Paterson.*

Finally, Williams included a comment which certainly must have been confirmed by his knowledge of Pound's experience and which may have explained in part why Williams' own satiric thrusts were at first so carefully hidden in *Paterson.* "Satire, direct satire seems a lost art today . . . But with the will for it and the proper disguises, it might well and still serve for getting said salutarily that which would put us in jail were we to speak outright." Williams disguised his own satire well, and he didn't really expect his work to be understood on all of its various levels. As he neared completion of Book One in February of 1945, he wrote to Laughlin, "It [*Paterson*] frightens me a bit and, as always, I don't think it's real; I wonder if it's really there—among those pages of words. It doesn't seem likely. And if so, WHAT is there—gravel for critics? I hope it cuts their hearts out. It won't; they are too grooved in their protected tracks ever to turn aside to see the dulled world close about them—always whistling into the distance."
NOTES

CHAPTER II


5. Williams, Imaginations, p. 88.


7. Williams, I Wanted to Write a Poem, pp. 48-49.

8. Williams, Imaginations, p. 90.


10. Williams, Imaginations, p. 91.


12. Williams, Imaginations, p. 93.

13. Williams, Imaginations, p. 97. A reference to Sam Butler in the beginning of the chapter identifies the satiric nature of the chapter.


15. Williams, Imaginations. Ref. to Demuth, p. 98; Ref. to Gris, p. 107; Ref. to the artist, p. 105.


20 Williams, *I Wanted to Write a Poem*, pp. 48 and 49.


22 Williams, *I Wanted to Write a Poem*, pp. 48 and 50.


26 Poe, IV, 409-419.


28 In a Nov. 1936 letter to Pound (Selected Letters, p. 164), Williams notes that his mother is helping him translate an old book Pound once left at the house, *El Perro y la Calentura* by Quevedo.


32 Unpublished manuscript D4, Lockwood Library, SUNY, Buffalo. Future references will be identified by SUNY manuscript numbers listed in the Baldwin and Meyers Catalogue.

33 Letters from Williams to John Laughlin are housed at Harvard Univ.; however, copies are also available at Beinecke Library. Quotations are from the copies at Yale. Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Feb. 16, 1939.
Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Apr. 5, 1939.

Letter from Williams to Laughlin, June 7, 1939.

Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Sept. 24, 1940.

Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Sept. 25, 1940.

Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Dec. 14, 1940.

Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Mar. 26, 1939.

Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Apr. 5, 1939.


Williams, Selected Essays, p. 197.

Williams, Selected Essays, p. 198.

Williams, Selected Essays, p. 207.


Williams, Selected Essays, p. 212.

Williams, Selected Essays, p. 217.

Williams, Selected Essays, p. 213.


Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Jan. 23, 1942.

Letter from Williams to Laughlin, July 13, 1942.

Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Dec. 27, 1943.

Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Jan. 24, 1943.
55. Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Aug. 24, 1944.
56. Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Oct. 24, 1944.
57. Letter from Williams to Laughlin, "July something or other," 1945.
58. Letter from Williams to Laughlin, July 24, 1945.
59. Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Aug. 9, 1945.
60. Letter from Williams to Laughlin, May 6, 1949.
62. Unpublished Yale manuscript.
64. Williams, I Wanted to Write a Poem, p. 83.
65. Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Feb. 4, 1945.
CHAPTER III

THE CHAUCER CONNECTION: WHERE LANGUAGE AND COMEDY MEET

By the early forties, Williams suspected his own importance in American literature. He sometimes felt like a giant despite those critics who still insisted on classifying him as a pygmy. He knew his experiments in the American language, both in prose and in poetry, were leading toward new perspectives about form. He was, in fact, struggling to develop a poetics which would be adaptable to the American language and to American life, but he was struggling against the odds. Free verse was in disrepute; many poets were turning toward a new formalism based on the fixed meter of traditional prosody; and the best poets, like Pound and Eliot, had turned their energies toward economics, politics and religion, partialities in a complex pluralistic world. Williams had been working for two decades to learn the language of his own land and to relate the significance of that language to his world and his work. He was ready to apply his discoveries and blast away old ideas in his long poem Paterson, but he was competing with men who found their places in literary tradition. Not until the early forties did he clearly see how his own thinking belonged to an opposing tradition which could
embrace the many diverse aspects of his developing long poem.

Williams' reading of Poe in the twenties had raised some basic questions about language and had set him on a journey to discover how language could reflect a poet's own cultural heritage rather than a borrowed or imposed cultural tradition. His studies in the thirties of H. L. Mencken's monumental work *The American Language* supported his own observations about distinct and differing language patterns. However, not until the forties and his discovery of Chaucer did Williams find a literary figure whose work was universally respected yet complete and complex enough to undergird both his maturing poetics and satiric impulses. By this time, Williams knew he would need to integrate his interest in language with his interest in the people of Paterson and his interests in both with a comic approach to the long poem rather than a tragic approach. Both Poe and Mencken had been essential to Williams' preparation for *Paterson*, but only Chaucer could link Williams securely to a literary tradition which would encompass his language experimentation and include his satiric devices as part of a broader comic approach. As he progressed in his study of Chaucer's works and began publishing *Paterson*, Williams became more and more aware of correspondences between himself and Chaucer. By establishing a connection with this medieval master poet, Williams could integrate his attempts to answer problems proposed by Poe with
solutions suggested by Mencken plus his own unique contribution to twentieth century letters.

In addition to unabashed admiration for Poe's use of satire, Williams had recognized two other important elements in Poe's writing. When he wrote In the American Grain in the early twenties, Williams had given careful attention to both Poe's American originality and his common sense approach to metrics. The need to abandon foreign literary models would eventually become for Williams a campaign linked with the need to recognize a native American idiom. From the mid-twenties, Williams had been listening carefully to the speech of his own neighborhood. He began to incorporate local speech patterns in both prose and poetry, struggling to reproduce spontaneous rhythms and working toward a new metrical concept without distorting the local syntax. He also championed such experiments by other American writers, particularly poets, and called for a reevaluation of American poetic tradition. In the early thirties, he discovered another American who had already made progress in the same direction. A belated investigation of H. L. Mencken's third edition of The American Language provided Williams' first major leap forward in his search for an American idiom separate from the English language.¹

In 1932, Gorham Munson wrote to Williams asking for a contribution to The New English Weekly which would help "thresh out the whole question of British Tradition and
Williams provided an article which expressed his contempt for Americans who attempted to duplicate the British idiom but without going beyond the same sort of carping against a borrowed literature Poe had expressed a century earlier. Williams also began to dig into the issue, and within fourteen months wrote a review of Mencken's third edition of *The American Language* a decade after its publication. Williams was particularly provoked because Mencken had failed to use the new poetry as evidence of a distinctly American language in the twentieth century. Although Mencken had included an appendix entitled "Specimens of the American Vulgate," he included only one poem, an obscure piece of American slang by John V. A. Weaver. In his review, Williams called attention to Mencken's wish for "the time when a poet, such as Dante or Chaucer, shall appear willing wholly to risk a use of the vulgar tongue." This was the very task Williams had set for himself, a task he would come to believe every American poet should attempt to accomplish in his work.

In a brief correspondence with Mencken, Williams offered him a three-page memorandum on the relationship of new poetry to the American language. In that memorandum, written in 1934, Williams stated a tenet of his own work—that the American poet must find a new metric which would allow him to use the spoken language without distortion of meaning: "The pronunciation as spoken must make his line." Although Mencken later apologized to Williams for not using
his material and Williams was somewhat disappointed by the fourth edition which appeared in 1936, he still found much to praise and added the fourth edition to his library. Williams also added a 1924 pocket book reprint of an older book by Mencken, a 1916 collection of essays entitled A Book of Burlesques. Williams was thus aware that Mencken had begun his assault on the academic establishment with satirical sketches before he had published the first edition of his serious long work, The American Language.

Williams praised Mencken's fourth edition in an essay published in the North American Review in 1936. By this time, Williams was recognizing goals he held in common with Mencken, for he cited "The Pronunciation of American" as "one of the most important chapters" and suggested that a secret might indeed be found "in the monotony of our intonation." In the conclusion of this review, Williams challenged his fellow Americans to recognize the significance of Mencken's work and sarcastically suggested why some Americans are afraid to say we have a language of our own. "Surely we wouldn't be that vulgar. We might, we just possibly might, come to a realization of ourselves that would blast the very rules of prosody out the window."

By 1939, Williams was engaged in an effort to blast such rules out of American writing both as a lecturer and as a practicing poet. The typescript of a talk he delivered at Dartmouth in 1939 shows Williams insisting, "Henry L. Mencken's basic study, The American Language, should be a
textbook in every college." In this same speech, Williams points out "that form must be discovered in our speech" and describes one of his own techniques for making such a discovery: "... in some of my own work all I have to do is to transcribe the language when hot and feelingly spoken. For when it is charged with emotion it has a tendency to be rhythmic, low down, inherent in the place where it is being used. And that is, to me, the origin of form, the origin of measure. The rhythmic beat of charged language."

In a segment of this typed speech which Williams had crossed out with large inked strokes, he had also considered making a direct attack on Eliot as one who had avoided the task of finding the proper form for spoken American, one who, when "confronted by the major poetic opportunity of his training and experience side-stepped it, as one might say, flunked out in his senior year..." By the late thirties, Williams was seeing his task as one associated with Mencken's views on the American idiom and privately, if not publicly, was condemning those like Eliot who had opted for the English language which Mencken maintained schoolmasters always sought to preserve.

By this time, too, Williams was gathering his own collection of specimens of the American vulgate—letters, historical documents, newspaper accounts and transcriptions from everyday conversations. Some of these would become part of the long poem he knew he must eventually write.

One collection of manuscripts entitled Detail and Parody
for the Poem Paterson shows how Williams was experimenting with fragments of the spoken language and how he was using poems to parody poetic devices from traditional imagery to accepted patterns of rhyme. In fragments entitled Details, Williams frequently used an exact transcription of the spoken language but arranged the words carefully in lines and stanzas which would designate a particular vocal emphasis.

Detail
Hey!
Can I have some more
milk?
YEAAASSS!
—always the gentle
mother!

Even with this short experiment, Williams tried different methods of stanza and line arrangement. The version above is the final version and therefore merits careful examination. The first stanza is simply a common question which a child might pose to his parent, but line arrangement and punctuation suggest the child's intonation. As a single line, the colloquial and familiar "Hey!" demands the reader's attention just as a child demands attention from a parent. The second and longest line dictates a more rapid pace as the reader is encouraged to hurry through five single-syllable words before pausing. Then, because the last word is placed as a single line, the reader both slows and stresses the crucial word, "milk." The second stanza includes both the mother's reply and an authorial comment.
The "yes" is stretched with additional letters, an effect developed by E. E. Cummings, which now slows the entire word while the capital letters and an exclamation point emphasize volume and tone. The mother's tone is then ironically undercut by the slight sarcasm suggested by the word "gentle." "Always," "gentle" and "mother" are all in positions of natural stress because the short lines allow each to begin a line, end a line and be a line in itself. The "Detail" comes amazingly close to representing the intonation of the child, the mother and the commentator.

This "Detail" was published in *The Broken Span* as one of fifteen poems designated "For the Poem PATTERSON," a new spelling for the old poem. The group of poems included four details placed among eleven other poems from the *Detail and Parody* manuscript. They provide a good indication of Williams' early intentions for using the poems in *Paterson*. Each of the details is an attempt to depict true speech rhythms and American intonation while the remaining poems contain parodies of traditional poetic devices, commentaries on poetic form and content or both. Poetic language or obvious poetic devices are nearly always undercut when they are used in this collection, and although love is the topic of several poems, traditional ideas about love are demolished along with traditional ideas about poetry. Although no two poems function exactly alike, the one which seems to best illustrate several of the concepts Williams was striving for is entitled "St. Valentine." The poem was
probably intended as a laugh at poetic devices used by Edna St. Vincent Millay in her early poetry collections. The title could easily refer to Millay's name in a way similar to the kind of name play Williams would later use in *Paterson.* The parodic technique is also one that Williams would use with several variations in *Paterson.*

**St. Valentine**

A woman's breasts
for beauty
A man's delights
for charm

The rod and cups
of duty
to stave us
from harm!

A woman's eyes
a woman's
thighs and a man's
straight look:

Cities rotted to
pig-sties
will stand up by
that book!

The first two stanzas contain the sentimental approach to love which characterized many of Millay's poems as well as traditional rhythms and rhymes which Millay used effectively. "Rod and cups" also suggest the overtly sexual imagery frequently found in Millay's poems. However, Williams maneuvers the straight and curved concepts into more than a view of male and female anatomies. By the third stanza, Williams displaces both the usual rhythm and rhyme primarily by moving "thighs" from its normal place at the end of the second line to the beginning of the third
line. Thus, if the reader pauses at the end of the second line, he will expect a rhyme for "woman's" in the fourth stanza and he will also be left with a possessive word which lacks its usual noun. Both the desires for grammatical and metrical completion are thwarted by the moving of a single word. This revision of traditional lines is a prelude to Williams' undercutting of sentimental sexuality as subject matter for poems. In the final stanza, Williams suggests that rotten cities can replace traditional love poetry as content for books of modern poetry, a poetic statement of his firm belief that any and all subject matter is fit for poetry. By using a colon after "a man's/ straight look," he even manages to suggest that a man can look more directly at urban ugliness than this particular woman poet whose look, like her body, may be curved. By implication, the man must also find a new form for his content.

"St. Valentine" is only one of many experiments in the Detail and Parody manuscript. Nearly all of the experimental poems, however, have one quality in common; they are attempts at what Williams called "speech (analysed)." Attempts to break through old poetic habits range from the extreme formality of "St. Valentine" to the careful arrangement of casual language entitled "Detail." A note in his arrangement of poems for The Broken Span expands on what Williams was attempting to do in preparation for his long poem: "The conception of a lyric (or tragic) drama demands
lyrics! Studies in a language should precede that, the spontaneous (not natural) conformation of language as it is heard. Attempt to feel and then transcribe these lyrical language patterns . . . Poetry demands a different material from prose . . . "12

Sometime after 1941 when The Broken Span was published, Williams decided that these particular studies in language were not, after all, suitable for his long poem. In 1943, with the help of Louis Zukofsky, Williams chose a number of poems from the Detail and Parody manuscript and included them with other unpublished poems in The Wedge, a book at one time titled The (lang)Wedge.13 Although early drafts of Williams' manuscript for the book give some indication of his original purpose, later and final drafts show that with Zukofsky's help, Williams revised poems, dropped all of the "Details" and tightened up his book to what finally appeared to be another collection of poems not greatly different from earlier collections. By this time, Williams had decided to introduce his language theme in Paterson in a different way. Allegory with a satirical purpose would provide one dimension of the language theme. Another would be accomplished by using excerpts from the early "Paterson" plus a good deal of new poetry juxtaposed to selected pieces of prose, prose which illustrated a great variety of tone and style. Finally, Williams would tie himself to another major figure who was a recognized language innovator, and that figure was Chaucer. Williams
would eventually come to think of himself as a possible modern counterpart of this great medieval poet whom Mencken had commended for his use of the vulgar tongue and whose influence on English poetry had lasted over 500 years, up to Williams' own time.

It is difficult to say exactly when Williams began to read Chaucer closely, but references to Chaucer begin to appear in his letters and essays in the early forties and continue into the late fifties, the very time span when he was producing *Paterson*. In writing about the library in his father's house in 1959, Williams recalled a very early acquaintance with "at least the beginning of the *Canterbury Tales*" but also noted that he "did not read the story of *Troilus and Cresida* till much later." From childhood to mid-fifties is indeed a long time, for Williams apparently first read the love poem in 1942. In February of that year he wrote to Laughlin that he was reading *Troilus and Criseyde* and remarked, "Chaucer is a good novelist and even better a poet." He particularly notes Chaucer's use of language in *Troilus and Criseyde* and remarks how, in the use of rhyme, Chaucer "beats poor old literary Shakespeare a mile . . . but you got to have the language for it, a loose jointed varying dialect that takes 'em where it finds 'em--Latin, French, German, Danish, Greek and Irish with a few localisms thrown in." In *Paterson* Williams would stress the polyglot aspects of the American populace and
thus the American language, a language which requires a new kind of poetry.

Several factors may have prompted a renewal of Williams' interest in Chaucer. First, it would have been difficult for Williams to ignore Chaucer in the forties. Every anthology of English poetry included some selections from Chaucer. One example from Williams' own library was the *Viking Book of Poetry of the English Speaking World* edited by Pound's friend Richard Aldington and published in 1941. Williams no doubt received a copy of the book because Aldington had included one of his poems. Among the fourteen pages from Chaucer's work, a small section of *Troilus and Criseyde* is quoted and, of course, Chaucer's importance is duly noted in Aldington's introduction.

Of even greater importance is another book from Williams' library, the 1940 volume by Henry Willis Wells entitled *New Poets from Old: A Study in Literary Genetics*. Wells points out the strong influence of past poets and poetic movements on major modern poets. He includes extensive references to such Americans as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Hart Crane, E. E. Cummings, Wallace Stevens, Archibald Macleish, Robert Frost and Vachel Lindsay. In contrast to these poets who are presented with deep roots in tradition, Wells mentions Williams only twice. Early in the book, he uses Williams to illustrate poets who "exasperate certain of their readers by extreme modernity." Late in the book, he cites Williams again in order to show...
how "even writers justly reputed for their bold, fresh and imaginative style reconcile some notable traditionalism with their modernity." Wells uses Williams' extremely early poem "The Wanderer" to illustrate how "its central image of a man baptized in the water of a stream by a symbolic figure is reminiscent of allegories from Dante to Spenser." This may have been the first time Williams saw himself as a potential allegorist, a role he would assume as part of his satiric thrust in Paterson.

Whether or not Wells' book first pointed Williams toward allegory, it undoubtedly directed his attention to modern poets who were rooted in tradition, for many of the poems he would parody and the poets he would satirize are mentioned in Wells' book. Furthermore, Wells depicted Chaucer metaphorically as the main stem of English versification and as a promoter of the main stream of literary English. In Book One, Williams would introduce a metaphorical stream of American language and would use roots and tree imagery to depict Paterson's thoughts growing around earlier thoughts rather than as a branch of tradition.

My surface is myself.
Under which
to witness, youth is buried. Roots?

Everybody has roots. Though Williams insisted his thoughts had roots, he was not yet ready to openly identify those roots with
Chaucer or any literary tradition, for he was still against
the kind of academic associations critics tended to suggest
or refute. Williams' manuscripts and letters, however,
suggest that Williams had begun to covertly associate him-
self with Chaucer long before Book One was published.

In the early forties, Williams was cementing his
friendship with Charles Abbott, director of the Lockwood
Library at SUNY, Buffalo. As Williams' friendship with
Abbott grew, he frequently visited the Abbott home and had
access to Abbott's library which contained enough different
editions of Chaucer to identify Abbott as a Chaucerian
scholar. Abbott and Williams may well have talked about
Chaucer during the early forties when Williams was seeking
a form for his long poem. It is even possible that Abbott
suggested the scholarly edition of Chaucer's Complete Works
edited by F. N. Robinson, an edition that first appeared in
1933 and which Williams acquired for his personal library.21

Whatever the reasons for Williams' renewed reading in
Chaucer, he was definitely interested in establishing a
link between Chaucer and the poem Paterson even in its ear-
lier stages. Notes and manuscripts for Paterson which
Williams donated to Lockwood Library include schematic out-
lines, plans and notes which Williams wrote to himself plus
trial titles and drafts of much material which never
reached the poem. Among some of the earlier notes and
drafts which can be dated around 1942, two obvious references are made to Chaucer.

In one reference, written after Williams would have possessed Wells' book on literary genetics, Williams appears to be considering his own literary antecedents in relation to his work-in-progress Paterson. "THE FANTASTIC—as in the beginning already written is the cement. Chaucer comes to mind, my own Tenochtitlan, Spenser for the qualities that have always answered for the poetic job, NOT too damned complicated." The note appears on a work sheet where Williams also reminds himself to keep his material "factual—almost casual. . ." and in such a context suggests that Williams' use of fantastic material might well have applications to actual people and events. The conjunction of his own chapter on the destruction of the ancient city of Tenochtitlan from In the American Grain with a reference to Chaucer and Spenser also suggest an allegorical element, for this is the major element the three references have in common.

Another reference to Chaucer suggests that Williams might have confused the dream allegories with The Canterbury Tales. In this note, Williams suggests "a design on the general structure of Chaucer's CANTERBURY TALES at least in PARTS: such as THE DREAM OF BEAUTIFUL WOMEN." Williams further clarifies this plan as "the dreams of N. F. Paterson stirred by Mrs. Paterson but not to be (unless desired) stated as dreams. They are not
'dreams' but more than ever the actuality—the 'actuality' by being dreams." When Williams considered stressing Paterson's dreams of women, he may have had either Chaucer's Legend of Good Women or Book of the Duchess in mind. The first is a collection of tales about women faithful to their lovers and the second is a love vision or a tale within a tale. Williams was probably thinking more of a structural framework than of content though he may also have associated some of his women with women created by Chaucer.

His early notes show Williams exploring several narratives about unfaithful wives, a type Chaucer had depicted with great success in The Canterbury Tales. One early plan Williams considered also indicates a kind of blatant comedy which would not finally get into the long poem but which suggests his early comic intentions.

A Sketch for the poem: Paterson

OR

THE HILARIOUS WIFE

In this brief sketch, the wife has many lovers just as the hero has "other women, any number—now and then. Always at it." The consideration of several male and several female characters as lovers of the main characters already suggests a kind of plurality Williams wanted in order to fully develop his satiric myth of the man-city and his mountain-wife. The long poem would involve a series of women, some real and some created by Williams. Before
deciding how the male-female relationship would be worked out, however, Williams worked diligently on still another narrative framework, a framework which allowed him to introduce easily his historical and allegorical material.

In late 1942, the year Williams began to mention his reading of Chaucer, he experimented with a narrative framework which included two adult males who appear to be caricatures of two different aspects of himself: Doc and Willie. In a note dated October 1942, Williams instructed himself, "cut out Paterson. Call him Willie." Over fifty pages of notes, drafts and revisions reveal how much effort Williams put into this plan before it was finally aborted. In these manuscripts, Willie is a writer who is frequently visited at night by Doc, a sometimes drunken physician with great admiration for Willie. Willie reads to Doc from a long work-in-progress which often includes historical accounts about Paterson. Thus, Williams tries the tale within a tale, a form common in Chaucer.

In the Doc and Willie manuscripts, some historic details already carry a subtle satiric sting. The "monster in human form" who will remain as part of the published Book One is here identified by Doc as "a paralytic hydrocephalic," and again as "a water head" by Willie, who prefers "to use our own language." In a 1940 letter to Laughlin, Williams had suggested that one must love Ezra Pound as one would love a mongoloid idiot, and the monster surely appears to be a veiled reference to Pound or any
other overly intellectual poet. By the time Williams put together Book One, however, he had selected historic facts to link the monster to Eliot rather than to Pound. At another point in the early manuscript, Willie claims to be "an agent" for "the eternal word." Given Williams' interest in language and his contempt for Eliot's use of religious reference in his work, "the eternal word" was probably intended as a double-edged pun. In still another manuscript, Willie appears to be humorously androginous, possibly a caricature of Tireseus as Eliot had featured him in The Waste Land.

Both Doc and Willie disappeared from the poem long before Book One went to press, but many lines of poetry from the Doc and Willie sequences and some historic material were retained. Also, Paterson developed into a hero with a dual identity, and the long poem took on multiple purposes. Paterson became Noah Faitoute Paterson, a city and a man, a giant asleep but simultaneously a poet relentlessly seeking a language to arouse the sleeping giant. In the final poem, the city-giant, formed of the very earth upon which the city stands, becomes a mythical character. His dreams, as history, add a second dimension. Finally, his embodiment in the figure of the poet adds a third dimension, the dimension which unites Williams' multipurpose poem. When Williams points out in Book One that his theme is "triple piled," he implies that the poem is written for many different readers, that there are multiple
interpretations to be discovered before any given reader can comprehend the full scope of the poem.

The technique of triple piling also allowed Williams to assign triple identities to the historic characters who had actually plunged over the Paterson falls: Sam Patch, the daredevil who claimed he could leap the falls and Sarah Cumming, the minister's wife who, while on her honeymoon, fell or leaped over the falls. Williams had been aware of these characters and their comic possibilities as far back as his reading of Poe. At some point, Patch also became associated in Williams' mind with Pound and Patch's leap into the Passaic River with Pound's metaphorical leap into Mencken's streams of language. Along with Pound, E. E. Cummings was the poet whose language use Williams most respected, but Williams also recognized a moralistic, almost religious aspect in some of Cummings' work. By changing the names Sarah and Hooper Cumming to Sarah and Hopper Cumming, Williams would associate Sarah's plunge over the falls with Cummings' leap into the stream of language even as he associated Cummings' moralistic poetry with the minister who was left behind.

Once Williams had begun to consider Patch and the two Cummings as allegorical representations of Pound and Cummings, he may well have stumbled onto a third possibility for a covert identity in his reading of Chaucer. Two Chaucerian scholars who would have interested Williams were also named Patch and Cummings. Harold Rollin Patch was a
well-known scholar who co-edited one of the books on Chaucer which Williams added to his library and Hubertis Cummings is mentioned prominently in notes in the scholarly Robinson edition Williams also read. Since Williams would include allusions to or quotations from Chaucer in three of his other four books, it is quite possible that he also intended Patch and Cummings to represent Chaucerian scholars as well as fellow poets and historic characters. Thus, his early leapers into the stream of language could indeed have triple-piled identities.

In his book *The Indebtedness of Chaucer's Works to the Italian Works of Boccaccio*, Cummings had treated a literary relationship as important as the Pound-Williams relationship which would become a colorful thread in the tapestry of *Paterson*. Cummings had not only shown what Chaucer borrowed from Boccaccio but also what he had added to become "an interpreter of life," Williams' own desire even in his earliest "Paterson." Furthermore, in his earliest version of *Paterson* Williams had referred to Pound as the Pope. Pound's long association with Italy would surely have been enough for a scholarly reader to associate the title of Cummings' book with a Pound-Williams relationship. Despite the fact that Chaucer borrowed content rather than structural principles from Boccaccio and Williams felt he was more indebted to Pound for his structural innovations in the poetic line, Williams may well have intended Hubertis Cummings, the scholar who linked Chaucer to
Boccaccio, as a third, though hidden, identity for Hopper Cumming.

Even more important, and probably significant in the development of Williams' comic perspective, was the better-known scholar, H. R. Patch. Though Williams may have first discovered Patch when he acquired the Patch and Neilson 1921 edition of Selections from Chaucer for his library, it is also possible that Charles Abbott may have alerted Williams to Patch's new commentary, On Rereading Chaucer, published in 1939.28 Williams undoubtedly would have been delighted with Patch's book, for it stresses Chaucer's comedy and his humanity. Patch's approach to Chaucer so closely resembles attitudes Williams took toward his own work in early drafts that it seems likely he became acquainted with Patch's study of the comic dimension in Chaucer's work.

Patch stressed the realism in Chaucer's dream allegories just as Williams insisted on the "actuality" of Paterson's dreams. Patch stressed the good humor and pleasure associated with Chaucer's satire and irony, insisting that Chaucer's humor was never destructive. In one of Williams' early drafts of a Prelude, he includes a similar reminder to himself:

Let injury be far from my thoughts as I go.29
In this same Prelude, Williams first parodies Eliot's line from "Prufrock:" "I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be." 

Certainly I am not a robin, nor erudite, the bird that returns to the same ground year by year.

Williams' version stresses his own simplicity even as it gently pokes fun at Eliot's line and undercuts the sophisticated bird imagery Eliot used in poems such as "Burnt Norton," the first of Four Quartets. Williams would eventually refine the passage even more, adding a reference to Erasmus, the father of satire, and provocatively suggesting the subtle difference between his own poem and poems by other poets.

Certainly I am not a robin nor erudite, no Erasmus nor bird that returns to the same ground year by year. Or if I am . . . the ground has undergone a subtle transformation, its identity altered. (19)

The passage appears in Book One, but Paterson contains many such subtle transformations of passages from other writers. Just as Chaucer had coupled his comedy with congeniality, Williams, in his early manuscripts, indicates a desire for good humor.

Another aspect of Chaucer's work which Patch praised was Chaucer's interest in the common people. Though not a strong social reformer, Chaucer, according to Patch, "spreads the contagious propaganda of a kindly view of human nature," and Patch shows how this view extends to the lower classes.  

Williams, too, took such a view in his
poetry and had already written "Paterson: Episode 17," a segment to be included in the final poem in which he uses a poor black girl to depict his essence of a "beautiful thing." 32 Like Chaucer, Williams was a poet whose view of man embraced many levels of living. His characters in *Paterson* are drawn from a variety of social levels just as Chaucer's characters are varied in *The Canterbury Tales*.

Finally, it was almost certainly Patch who demonstrated to Williams the ironies in *Troilus and Criseyde*, for most critics of the period tended to read the poem more soberly. Williams' allusion to this love poem by Chaucer is as obscure as his triple identities for Patch and Cumming, but the chain of events which led to such an allusion and the ironic twist it gives Williams' material can be traced through Williams' letters and manuscripts from the early forties.

In even his earliest drafts, Williams intended to introduce a series of women, women who would influence *Paterson* as he sought a language for his people. In the final poem, most of these women are given names which begin with the letter "C": Sarah Cumming, Cress, Madame Curie and Corydon. The only other woman with a significant role in *Paterson* is a nurse named Phyllis whom Williams considered a youthful female version of Paterson. Williams evidently intended that all the major females would be aspects of a single female while all the males would contribute aspects of a single male.
It is interesting to notice how heroines with names beginning with "C" began to appear in Williams' early manuscripts and how one of these heroines became associated with Chaucer's Criseyde. In very early drafts, Williams didn't differentiate material as designated for particular books. He had definitely determined that Sarah Cumming would appear in Book One when he made a rough outline of the four books he had originally planned, but he had not yet assigned a definite place to two other women who also appear in early drafts and notes. One is Madame Curie who would eventually be relegated to Book Four. The other is Marcia Nardi, a poetess whom Williams befriended in the spring of 1942.

In June of 1942, Williams encouraged Laughlin to read some of Nardi's poems claiming she looked like "a Salvation Army reject" who would "die if we don't pick her up." When Laughlin agreed to publish some of her poems, Williams urged him as a personal favor to notify her and send her payment in advance. A week later he also said he wanted to do more for her though he did not mention anything about using her in his long poem. Manuscripts show, however, that Williams' earliest intention was to make Nardi one of the faithless wives who was also something of a language muse. In one fragment, she would provide her favors to Eliot and Pound as well as to her unidentified husband.

Nardi corresponded with Williams through the end of 1942 and the beginning of 1943, but her letters grew
increasingly shrill as he was unable to provide the kind of friendship she needed. Sometime during this period, Williams told her he wanted to use parts of her letters in his long poem and she agreed, but by the time Book One went to press, Williams had totally lost track of her. It was probably after she disappeared from his life that Williams decided to associate her with Chaucer's heroine who had been unfaithful to her lover.

By signing Nardi's letters "La votre, C" and changing Nardi's name to "Cress," Williams could subtly identify her with Criseyde, the woman who passionately professed her love for Troilus, then found a new love more convenient when her circumstances changed. Williams could thus suggest the irony of Nardi's ardent protestations of need for his friendship by implying that, like Criseyde, she would find a new friend as her own circumstances changed. The allusion to Troilus and Criseyde, though oblique, is particularly apt since Cress's letters are addressed to Dr. Paterson, a hero named for his native city just as Troilus had been named for his native city of Troy.

By late 1944, Williams was not only associating his literary hero and heroine with characters from Chaucer but was also viewing Chaucer's talents in relation to his own hopes for a new American poetry. In November of 1944, Williams typed a letter to Byron Vazakas regarding Vazakas' book of poems, Transfigured Night. After commenting on how Vazakas' poems appeared to be working toward a new form,
Williams identified Vazakas as an "urban poet." At the end of the letter, Williams added in a handwritten note, "Chaucer in his day with a touch more of humor perhaps did the same." Three days later, Williams wrote to Marianne Moore, and in mentioning Vazakas to her, revealed a stream of thought which probably related to his own work on Paterson. After calling Vazakas a "form inventor," Williams continues:

Aside from that he has a Lamb-like urban talent which used to appear in some of the work of Wally Gould. Do you remember? Wallace Stevens used to have more of it but he has lost all that now. A metropolitan softness of tone, a social poetry that Chaucer had long ago to such perfection. You remember how Chaucer had Cressida sign her letters to the man she left behind her in Troy? "La votre C." Marvelous! Vazakas may possibly develop that opportunity if he is able.

Williams was not only identifying qualities he saw in Vazakas' poetry and recalled in Stevens' early work; consciously or unconsciously, he must have been describing his own urban poem, a poem he believed touched with Chaucerian humor and controlled by a search for form.

Paterson was to be a poem about a city and an urban poet, a comedy spiced with satire, but it was also to include a search for an American language and poetic forms to fit that language. Williams had been looking into the whole subject of prosody. He had examined *The Science of English Verse* by Sidney Lanier and *A History of English Prosody* by George Saintsbury. Both writers emphasized Chaucer's importance in establishing the English foot, and
both writers are quoted or referred to in essays or drafts of speeches Williams delivered in the forties.

One essay which focuses heavily on Lanier's work is entitled "The Present Relationship of Prose to Verse." In the essay, Williams cited "the fundamental changes Chaucer made, a fixed typic line, the iambic, usually the iambic pentameter . . ." Williams notes how these forms have dominated English poetry since Chaucer's time and suggests that contemporary poets must teach their "ears to hear anew" if they are to discover why their language is not suited to iambic rhythms. The opening paragraph of this unpublished essay is particularly interesting because it presents one of Williams' early goals and can be associated with the spelling "Patterson" in several early drafts, a spelling probably adopted to accommodate the pun, "patters on."

The man who can conquer the dominance of iambic pentameter, in our verse, or find a way to subordinate it, can conquer our world. I do not say he will overnight grow famous or overwhelmingly successful, he will not, but if he can find a way to make the words go at a different pace from the accepted patter of the prevailing mode we may give him our confidence.

Although Williams dropped the spelling Patterson in favor of the traditional Paterson, he does attempt in his long poem to break the dominance of iambic pentameter and establish a new meter based on speech rhythms.

As part of his essay relating prose to verse, Williams attempts to analyze three contemporary selections of prose. Besides concluding that the prose has been written by
professionals, he considers how "it falls into certain rhe-
torical periods of breathings which are unlike the divi-
sions of verse, in fact which any slip into a verselike
period would destroy, at once. The writer must not allow
the slightest slip to occur on that count or the value of
his writing would be gone." In *Paterson* Williams uses
prose excerpts freely in part to demonstrate where the
American writer must search if he is to discover the inher-
ent rhythms of his own language. By seeking a new metric
consonant with the language of his day, Williams had good
reason to consider himself a modern-day Chaucer.

About eight months after Book One was published, in
November of 1946, Williams again mentioned Chaucer in a
letter to his friend Vazakas. By this time, Book One had
been received far better than Williams had expected. Two
distinguished critics, Isaac Rosenfeld and Randall Jarrell,
had praised the work highly and both had commented on
Williams' language theme. Perhaps this was why Williams
felt able to admit his own aspirations in regard to
Chaucer. Vazakas had written an article about Williams'
work and had mailed it to Williams for examination.
Williams praised the article highly and suggested a few
minor changes. He also confided to Vazakas how "...with
a more measured emphasis any reader would be impressed as
'tho let us say they were reading of the genius of
Chaucer." Although Vazakas may have caught Williams' hint,
that particular article was not published. Williams,
however, gave up neither his interest in Chaucer nor his attempts to identify himself with Chaucer.

In March of 1948, several months after Williams had finished Book Two but a month before publication, Williams again wrote to a friend about a quotation from Chaucer which would eventually find its way into Williams' poem. Parker Tyler, who had reviewed Williams' work from the thirties up to the time of *Paterson* Book One, was, like other critics, curious about Williams' use of prose in *Paterson*. Williams' answer to Tyler is interesting both for what it actually says and for what it implies.

All the prose including the tail which would have liked to have wagged the dog, has primarily the purpose of giving a metrical meaning to or of emphasizing a metrical continuity between all word use. It is not an antipoetic device, the repeating of which piece of mis-calculation makes me want to puke. It is that prose and verse are both writing, both a matter of the words and an interrelation between words for the purpose of exposition, or other better defined purpose of the art. Please do not stress other "meanings." I want to say that prose and verse are to me the same thing, that verse (as in Chaucer's tales) belongs with prose, as the poet belongs with "Mine host" who says in so many words to Chaucer, "Namoor, all that rhyming is not worth a toord." Poetry does not have to be kept away from prose as Mr. Eliot might insist, it goes along with prose and companionably, by itself, without aid or excuse or need for separation or bolstering, shows itself by itself for what it is. It belongs there, in the gutter. Not anywhere else or wherever it is, it is the same: the poem.

Since Book Two had not yet been published, it is important to remember that Williams' use of prose at this point had been praised primarily in two ways: as related to his search for a language and as deft characterization. In his answer to Tyler, Williams clarifies the linguistic
relationship as part of his old premise that the metrics for a language can be discovered in prose rhythms and transformed into poetry. Rosenfeld, however, had also viewed the prose as functioning the way Eliot's footnotes functioned in *The Waste Land*, but "moved into the poetic foreground." Williams did not want Tyler to explore that kind of meaning yet wanted him to know that the prose did have expository significance no one had noticed. In Book One, some of the prose excerpts carry the burden of Williams' satire and contribute to the literary allegory he develops in the poem. Though Williams decided not to point out explicit meanings to Tyler, his reference to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is drawn from the section which separates the satiric *Rime of Sir Thopas* from the moralistic prose *Tale of Melibee*. Williams undoubtedly knew that the rime of Sir Thopas was Chaucer's satire on overly lush literary romances, and he would later use the same quotation to suggest his own intentions.

By the time Book Four appeared, Williams had been severely criticized for his seemingly indiscriminate juxtaposition of poetry and prose in *Paterson*. Also, no one had called the reading public's attention to his oblique references to Chaucer in Books One and Two. In Book Four, he would add the quotation he had used in his letter to Tyler in such a way that no reader could overlook its source.
Sir Thopas (The Canterbury Pilgrims) says (to Chaucer)
Namoor—
Thy drasty rymyng is not
worth a toord
—and Chaucer seemed to think so too for he stopped and
went on in prose . (177)

Obviously, Williams is asserting the validity of using prose and poetry together in the same work, but the context of the quotation also implies that prose is preferable to outdated literary forms. Furthermore, Williams purposely calls attention to Chaucer's best known literary satire, The Rime of Sir Thopas. Williams conceivably could have forgotten that the host's name was Harry Bailey and that Sir Thopas was a character in Chaucer's tale rather than a pilgrim, but it is more likely that he wanted to alert his readers to the Chaucerian implications in his poem and to subtly suggest a satiric dimension. In Book Four, Williams winds up satiric portraits of Pound, Eliot, Crane and Cummings which he had begun in Book One. Since he had planned Book Four as the final book, he also concludes his literary allegory.

When Book Four went to press in late 1950, the first three books had been mainly misinterpreted even by favorable critics. Broad generalizing statements seldom took into account the numerous details Williams had so carefully selected, and almost no one noticed the interweaving of several themes with multiple dimensions of meaning. Williams hoped that publication of all four books as a single volume would help correct the situation. He wrote to
Laughlin, "I count a lot on having the four books between covers so that the reader progresses from beginning to end. In that way many things not now acceptable will gather meaning from being of the sequence of the book itself. It'll go, I'm sure, when read all together."\(^44\) Like so many of the various threads of meaning in *Paterson*, allusions to Chaucer depend on a reader catching both the comic dimension and the language emphasis of the poem. The oblique reference to Criseyde adds irony to letters written by Marcia Nardi. The more obvious reference to *The Rime of Sir Thopas* suggests both satire and a reason for including prose with poetry. Then, in retrospect, the reader familiar with Chaucer might see significance in the names of Patch and Cumming and associate them with Chaucerian scholars. Similarly, the unity of Williams' allegory only becomes apparent when Paterson's search for a language is associated with satiric portraits of other poets and with challenges to other poems. Williams must have believed some critics who were paying such careful attention to his poem would discover at least the major threads of his language theme and his literary allegory.

Whatever Williams had hoped, Book Four was not a sudden revelation to the critics. Instead, it puzzled many, provoked others, and forced even Williams' most devoted fans to withhold their judgment until more studies of the poem could be made. Williams, himself, was not satisfied either with the completed poem's critical reception or with
the poem itself as any kind of a final statement. Within a year, he considered adding a fifth book.

Williams hadn't forgotten about Chaucer either, and in 1952 he was associating his literary son with Chaucer. In Book Four, Williams had assumed the role of father figure for a whole new generation of poets by including in _Paterson_ two letters from Allen Ginsberg. Ginsberg was an aspiring poet who also lived in Paterson and who had sent some of his poems to Williams seeking the older man's interest and approval. In 1952, when Williams wrote an introduction for _Empty Mirrors_, Ginsberg's collection of early poems, he called the poems "a human pilgrimage, like Geoffrey Chaucer's."45

Five years later, Williams also may have viewed his own poem as a kind of pilgrimage, a pilgrimage filled with good humor. When he put together Book Five, Williams turned the satiric spotlight on himself. He depicted himself as the aging Paterson who could at once appear as both satyr and unicorn, a potent figure who had perfected his craft as a legacy for future poets. In a passage of Book Five which relates Williams' own exterior world to the interior world of his medieval allegory, Williams includes a line from Chaucer's Prologue to _The Canterbury Tales_. The birds "that slepen al the night with open ye" (231) are both Chaucer's birds and Williams' birds, but they are also the birds which draw Williams into the famous unicorn tapestries where he becomes the unicorn. When Williams
revises the old medieval allegory to suit his own purposes, he treats his own pilgrimage through life with true Chaucerian humor.

Williams had good reasons for making the Chaucer connection in his long poem. No other figure could so comprehensively provide the combination of structural innovation, irony, satire and outright high spirits which Chaucer had embodied in his works. Though Williams abandoned the narrative frameworks Chaucer had used so effectively, he accurately saw that Chaucer's other techniques provided the complexly varied texture he needed in his modern collage, Paterson.
NOTES

CHAPTER III


2Weaver, pp. 78-79.

3Quoted in Weaver, p. 79.

4Quoted in Weaver, p. 81.


6Williams, Selected Essays, pp. 170-174.

7Williams, Selected Essays, p. 173.

8SUNY manuscript C49.

9SUNY manuscript D4.

10William Carlos Williams, The Broken Span (New York: New Directions, 1941). Williams later returned to the original spelling, Paterson.

11Whittemore, p. 168, notes that McAlmon referred to Millay as "that lady poetess Vere St. Vitus" in "Post-Adolescence."

12SUNY manuscript D5.

13SUNY manuscript D6.


15Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Feb. 6, 1942.


18. Wells, p. 325.

19. Wells, pp. 131 and 77.


21. Mrs. Charles Abbott, in a letter dated Feb. 20, 1979, identifies the following works by Chaucer in her husband's library:

- Chaucer's Poetical Works, 6 vols., Aldin Edition
- Chaucer's Canterbury Tales for the Modern Reader, ed. Arthur Burrell
- College Chaucer, ed. MacCracken
- Works of Chaucer, ed. Walter W. Skeat
- Works of Chaucer, ed. F. J. Mather, Jr.
- Kelmscott Chaucer


22. SUNY manuscript E1.

23. SUNY manuscript E4.

24. SUNY manuscript E1.

25. SUNY manuscript E10.


29. SUNY manuscript E4. This draft of a Prelude was written about the same time as notes referring to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.


32. Williams, Collected Earlier Poems, pp. 438-442.

33. Letter from Williams to Laughlin, June 9, 1942.

34. Letters from Williams to Laughlin, July 13 and 21, 1942.

35. SUNY manuscript E4.


37. Letter from Williams to Byron Vazakas, Nov. 5, 1944, Yale.


40. Letter from Williams to Byron Vazakas, Nov. 28, 1946, Yale.

41. Mariani, pp. 77-79.

42. Mariani, p. 81.

44. Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Oct. 4, 1950.

CHAPTER IV

DELINEATING THE GIANTS

Williams finally completed Book One of Paterson in early February of 1945. He wrote of the event not only to Laughlin, his publisher, but also to Horace Gregory, a personal friend and one of the few literary critics Williams thoroughly trusted. To Gregory, Williams confessed that his friend Kitty Hoagland, who had typed the manuscript, and his wife Floss "were both curiously impressed and agreed I should have my pants kicked—a good sign." To Laughlin, Williams not only declared that he hoped his book would be "gravel for critics" which "cuts their hearts out," but also jokingly asked where he should send his "contribution to the meal of the gods, perhaps a radish..." This attitude of playful joking was unsuited to the high tone of a serious epic, but it did suggest Williams' pleasure in completing the first part of a complex comedy, a strange book that could be appreciated on several different levels.

Williams had good reason to be pleased with himself. He had just completed the first installment of a long poem which would demonstrate his commitment to America and his deepest beliefs about poetry. He had developed a form more like a scrapbook than a poem, a literary work with distinct
segments as varied as the local newspaper, a work filled with particulars about Williams and his world. He had begun, in fact, the creation of his own myth, the myth of a man and his city raised to larger-than-life proportions, the myth of a mind conscious of its own location in space and time, but also conscious of its own passions. All these aspects of his poem were implicit in the "Argument" Williams wrote for the first edition of Book One:

Paterson is a long poem in four parts—that a man in himself is a city, beginning, seeking, achieving and concluding his life in ways which the various aspects of a city may embody—if imaginatively conceived—any city, all the details of which may be made to voice his most intimate convictions. Part One introduces the elemental character of the place. The Second Part comprises the modern replicas. Three will seek a language to make them vocal, and Four, the river below the falls, will be reminiscent of episodes—all that any one man may achieve in a lifetime.3

Williams' argument appears to have been aimed at readers who are informed and knowledgable about the current literary scene, readers who would be concerned with both the "voice" and its "intimate convictions," readers who would pay attention to both the language and the content. Williams, however, also had a larger reading audience in mind, a less literary audience. Ten years later, he recalled how he had approached that audience: "I wanted to make the thing topical, interesting to the reader. I knew the reader, any reader, would be interested in scandal so scandal went in. The documentary notations were carefully chosen for their live interest, their verisimilitude."4 Most of the documentary sections are either excerpts from
history or personal letters. Prose fragments from the past provide a local historical setting based on actual events. Letters which frequently challenge the poet in regard to his work establish an element of conflict in the poem. These prose pieces could appeal to readers less informed of literary trends and more concerned with the news and language of their own locality and the shaping of their own local poet. With slight changes, they could also carry a message for still another class of readers, a class who refused to settle for either the prominent literary aspects of the work or for the local appeal of gossip and conflict, a group who would scan every word and every line of a poem for literary or philosophical allusions, a group of critics who sought to reveal the fullest complexities and deepest psychological implications of any work they considered of major importance.

Levels of significance for different readers was not a new idea in literature. Eliot had pointed out such levels in relation to Shakespeare's work and R. P. Blackmur had used Eliot's perspicacity as a springboard for an analysis of the difficulties in Eliot's religious works and a call for closer attention to their deeper meanings. Blackmur first quotes Eliot:

In a play of Shakespeare you get several levels of significance. For the simplest auditors there is the plot, for the more thoughtful the character and the conflict of character, for the more literary the words and phrasing, for the more musically sensitive the rhythm, and for auditors of greater sensitiveness and understanding a meaning which reveals itself gradually. And
I do not believe that the classification of audience is so clear-cut as this; but rather that the sensitiveness of every auditor is acted upon by all these elements at once, though in different degrees of consciousness. At none of these levels is the auditor bothered by the presence of that in which he is not interested.

Blackmur's interest is in the class of readers with "greater sensitiveness and understanding," those who persist beyond the level of their subconscious appreciation to examine both the work and the relation of the work to its author and other works "until they are satisfied as to what a poem means," the class for whom and by whom "honest literary criticism is written." To Blackmur, this is the class which "preserves and supports poetry;" to Williams, this was the class which preserved and supported the wrong kind of poetry, yet a class he could not ignore. How could he address a class of readers he held in contempt?

Williams chose to address the new critics through a technique of concealed references he had learned from Quevedo, a kind of secret satire, a series of thrusts that would "cut their hearts out" if they recognized the intent but also a kind of satire they would not expect in Williams' work, a level of meaning he would conceal so well that its revelation would indeed be gradual, far more gradual than he first intended.

Williams speaks in Book One of his poem as "triple piled," and this triple level surely suggests material for differing audiences. The partially informed or common reader can enjoy the scandal and gossip and the idea of a
home territory grown to mythical proportions. The more literary reader can recognize Williams' ability to create myth, to use accepted literary devices and to demonstrate new devices as he searches for more appropriate ways to use the American language. The third audience consists of those critics who will persist in close analysis of the work until they discover the work's fullest complexity and depth of passion, the audience which had irritated Williams for so many years. Williams may well have wanted to conceal his satire at least until all four books were completed, for it would kill by ridicule any cult writing which requires highly specialized exegesis. His satire would be aimed at the very forms and techniques critics worked so hard to keep alive and at their favorite poets who provided raw material for their literary grist mill. Williams was staking his career on Paterson; if it was to become gravel for hostile critics, he would fill their craws with stones not so easily swallowed and even harder to digest.

Ever since the earliest "Paterson," Williams had dreamed of himself as the spokesman for his place, his people. He had believed the universal could be found and articulated only in the local, and he had determined to celebrate his own locality, his city of Paterson. During the years since his first poem, however, he had watched his city and his people suffer through a world war, a depression, and then become involved in another war. He had
written about his people in both prose and poetry but had watched the literary establishment grow farther and farther from the events of real life as they promoted tradition and erudition in literature which often alluded to long-past eras or to specialized interests in religion, philosophy or politics. Williams felt it his duty to attack such literature as well as those who wrote and promoted it. He would return to his long poem with more than a local emphasis. Only about one sixth of the poetic passages in Book One are drawn from the early poem. These local passages interrelate with other themes and other purposes to present a multidimensional poem.  

In the thirties, Williams had expanded his dream to include a search for that language which could embody the lives and aspirations of people around him, a colloquial language raised to the formality of a metrical system. Also, in the late thirties, as director of a Federal Writers' Project for New Jersey, Williams had renewed his interest in the history of his local area. He began to examine the wealth of material in prose histories of the Paterson area. At some point, he also became aware how certain carefully selected bits of prose so closely paralleled events of the literary world that, with only minor alteration, they could serve as allegory. By choosing carefully from historic prose and from his own large collection of letters from friends, Williams could tell the stories of both Paterson the city and Paterson the man. He
could also assert his belief that prose and poetry belong together and that a poet must study a variety of writing and speaking styles if he is to find the true metrical base of his native language. Thus, prose excerpts could demonstrate basic tenets of Williams' poetics even as they presented history, served as allegory or did both. Almost one third of Book One is devoted to such prose fragments.

Finally, in the late thirties and early forties, Williams saw his dreams of a new language and a local literature threatened. A literary establishment firmly entrenched in the universities promoted a return to formal metrics and continued to minutely dissect poems for their hidden meanings. Some poets, like Pound and Cummings, had moved forward in their language experiments despite critical protest or lack of interest. Others, notably Eliot and the school of new critics he had spawned had actually thwarted Williams in the pursuit of his dream. They had created a literary atmosphere which bred esoteric texts, texts to be unraveled only by close scrutiny of every line. Williams would fight them with their own weapons even while he provided a text readers could enjoy; he would provide a level of meaning "which reveals itself gradually," but rather than requiring greater sensitivity and understanding, it would require greater wit and a willingness to recognize the complexities of passion a man suffers when he is prevented from pursuing his dream. He had learned from Quevedo how to hide potentially dangerous inferences within
a text that might also serve other purposes. He would include parodies of other poems in the text of his own poem and would alter some prose fragments so they could serve allegorically even while they provided varied demonstrations of language use and local information. Just as the foreground of his poem would require techniques he had practiced in several genres—novel, short story, verse lyric and dramatic verse play—so the allegorical story hidden in his poem would exercise his talents in pun, parody and satire, devices he had also been concerned with in the several years preceding Book One.

Williams' use of satire would be just the opposite of traditional uses, for it would be subservient to his dream. Traditional satirists waged their attacks in the foreground of their poems, appealed to that level of readers who enjoy the conflict, the plot, the open wit of a satiric thrust. The more serious moralistic or idealistic goals of the satirist were often only implied and lingered in the background for more astute readers. Williams would reverse the process. His dream of a people aroused to their historical heritage and their growing living language would occupy the foreground of his poem. His contempt for and castigation of those who had held the literary limelight and confined him to the sidelines would be hidden where only the reader with wit and inclination could decipher it. When and if the new critics came prying, they would find caricatures of
their literary heroes plus comical allusions to some of their favorite works.

Perhaps Williams wished such a sympathetic reader as Gregory would be the first to discover his satire and would view it as a play of wit, the underside of his dream, the need to drive his case forward on every level of consciousness and for every level of reader. Perhaps he hoped the "kick in the pants" suggested by Floss and Kitty would set the tone for a compassionate reading of the playfully ironic but sometimes brutally serious dimension of his poem. Whatever Williams hoped for or expected, he was surprised with the initial critical response to Book One. Reviewers who had ignored him or been cool in the past now praised his autobiographical approach, applauded his Americanism, lauded his language theme and raised great expectations for the three books which were to follow. No one, neither Gregory nor less partisan readers, noticed the biting flavor of Williams' "radish." Only gradually, long after all four books had been completed and a fifth added, would critics begin to uncover the varied and subtle literary satire Williams had planned from the early forties and included from the very beginning of his poem.

Williams' decision to conceal his satiric thrusts at other writers developed slowly during the years before his first full draft of Book One was sent to the printer. During this same period, he was finishing up his translation of Quevedo's *Dog and the Fever*. With growing fascination,
he saw how Quevedo had hidden a potentially dangerous story in a collage of gossip, folk wisdom and doggerel.

Williams, too, had a collection of gossip and folk stories culled from old newspapers and historic accounts of Paterson. He also had a collection of other materials intended for a long poem: the early "Paterson" which already depicted the local territory; poems experimenting with rhythms, line lengths and stanzas derived from the spoken language; parodies of content and techniques used by other poets; and other poetic fragments related to the loose outline of a long poem to be written in four books. Williams also had a dangerous story to tell about the literary world with a potentially dangerous purpose behind his story. His own words in one early manuscript express the full threat of his intentions: "I shall never be satisfied until I have destroyed the whole of poetry as it has been in the past." Williams' destruction of past poetry would proceed both by demonstration and by deception. In the foreground of his poem, he would demonstrate all kinds of language innovations by intermixing the varied materials he had collected and composed for his long poem. Like Quevedo, he would devise a collage, a collage that could conceal a satiric substructure and also permit several themes to progress simultaneously.

Williams' collage is a collection of particulars, and nearly everything in his poem serves two or more purposes. First, the very unorthodox selection of materials asserts
Williams' belief that poetry must admit all areas of life as potential subject matter: old and new, ugly and beautiful, comic and serious. The mixture of prose and poetry also suggests that the natural rhythms of a language must be discovered by hearing how the language is effectively used in both raw prose and more formal experiments with verse. Finally, many passages of both prose and poetry are charged with double entendre. A preface which introduces both comic and serious themes also becomes a warning against writing stale philosophical poems; the mythic giants of Book One who bring a landscape to life are also mock-heroic anthropomorphic deities designed to ridicule Eliot's mythic and religious poetry. Allegorically, the giant Paterson represents Williams himself while other historic characters represent other literary giants competing with Williams.

When Williams decided to follow Quevedo's lead and conceal the satiric dimensions of his poem, he condensed a book-length introduction laced with parody to a mere two-and-a-half-page Preface for Book One. By excising obvious burlesque and relying on the technique of double entendre he had discovered in Quevedo's work, Williams trimmed his long introduction to a collection of hints about the poem which would follow and originated a technique of development by accretion which could be used throughout the long poem. Both serious themes and satiric motifs which begin in the Preface or in Book One can be fully understood only
as they are repeated with variations and integrated into new contexts throughout the entire poem.

In the Preface, Williams first depicts his poem as a quest, a hunt by dogs in pursuit of game, but the game pursued is not simply beauty, a traditional quest for poets. Rather, "Rigor of beauty is the quest." "Rigor" is the key word, for it asserts Williams' belief that beauty had been frozen into rigid categories, categories which should be sought out and destroyed. Beneath the rigor of beauty lies a more basic beauty which has been "locked in the mind past all remonstrance" by artificial distinctions which separate the language of prose from the language of poetry, which separate the language of literature from the purposes of men's lives and which therefore separate the people from a knowledge of their heritage and environment. Williams, as a physician, was familiar with the medical use of the term "rigor" and probably also intended his rigor to suggest the chill which precedes a fever, an oblique reference to Quevedo's work The Dog and the Fever, and a suggestion that rigid poetics must be found and burned away if the real and practical beauty of contemporary lives is to be unlocked by poetry. In Paterson, the chill of frozen concepts will be melted by the fever of creative discovery as rigidities are replaced by experimentation. The method will be deceptively simple:
To make a start,
out of particulars
and make them general, rolling
up the sum, by defective means— (3)

*Paterson* will be filled with particulars, episodes
from history, letters, a crusading evangelist, a well
drilling report, and a multitude of other details, many of
which will be aimed at a devastating critique of the cur-
rent literary scene and its removal from common life. Some
details will allegorically depict other poets; some will
allegorically present Williams' own story; some will demon-
strate where the serious writer should search for his lan-
guage and his themes and others will suggest bold innova-
tions in modern poetry. Thus, Williams will reach his gen-
eralizations by "defective means," neither traditional nor
consistent. Williams' particulars will work by accretion.
Given the several "defective means" by which he will
attempt to accomplish his purpose, Williams' technique
might be compared to a snowball being rolled on a two-inch
snowfall. The snowfall gathers stones, pebbles and dirt
along with the snow but grows progressively until it
reaches a formidable solidity. Williams uses the image of
rolling throughout his preface and the image itself also
works by accretion. He begins "rolling up the sum" by
depicting his poem as a dog among dogs, a poem among other
poems. Although the dog image appears only briefly in the
Preface, dogs will reappear throughout *Paterson*, and they
will always be associated with poems by either Williams or his contemporaries.

Sniffing the trees,
just another dog
among a lot of dogs. What
else is there? And to do?
The rest have run out—
after the rabbits.
Only the lame stands—on
three legs. Scratch front and back.
Deceive and eat. Dig
a musty bone (3)

Those poems which have run out after the rabbits are poems written by Pound and Eliot, and by implication poems by other poets who have either physically left their native country and the need to find an American idiom or who have detoured their talents into religious, political or economic concerns to the detriment of their craft. In October of 1944, after Williams had written the Preface, he wrote to Laughlin, "Your most recent Poet of the Year, Melville, whom Matthiessen has so brilliantly edited, makes me think what Pound and Eliot failed to do for our world. They were two little ignorants running away from the big job to play in the sand." 10 Williams believed Pound and Eliot could have devoted their vast talents to establishing an American culture and promoting the American language. Instead, they had sought an established culture in Europe. Pound had allowed economic and political theories to dominate his long poem The Cantos. Eliot had embraced Anglo-Catholicism and had recently written Four Quartets, a long philosophical poem which relies heavily on Christian mythology.
Williams' poem is left standing on three legs, but this lame "triple-piled" poem is dangerous. *Paterson* will survive by digging up musty bones, the stale elements of other poems, and devouring them through parody.

The first stale bone Williams' doggy poem will devour comes from *Four Quartets*, a poem Williams found so full of philosophical paradox that it could not be understood by most readers unless they resorted to critical interpretations. The parody is subtle, condensed to one third its original size and embedded in a statement of Williams' intentions for his own poem. It begins with an echo of the opening six words of Eliot's "East Coker": "In my beginning is my end."

> For the beginning is assuredly the end—since we know nothing, pure and simple, beyond our own complexities. (3)

The meaning here is ironic, for Eliot was dealing with a cyclical conception of time and suggesting that life, like the seasons, follows a rhythm of succession, but Williams is asserting that the very particulars of a man's birth circumscribe the field which he can know and understand. Nothing but his own complexities can possibly become pure and simple, and these complexities are related to his own environment, the cultural milieu into which he is born. Eliot has sought to know too much. He has left the land of his birth and has also reached beyond the limits of any man's knowledge in the metaphysical and
philosophical speculation of his poems. Such knowledge can only be expressed in ambiguous language, and philosophical ambiguity can't be directly applied to individual lives. Williams, in contrast, will write an autobiographical poem with knowledge of his own life and landscape, his own city and its history, scattered throughout the work.

Yet there is no return: rolling up out of chaos, a nine months' wonder, the city the man, an identity—it can't be otherwise—an interpenetration, both ways. Rolling up! obverse, reverse; the drunk the sober; the illustrious the gross; one. In ignorance a certain knowledge and knowledge, undispersed, its own undoing. (4)

In this stanza, Williams introduces and celebrates the birth of his own personal anthropomorphic myth, the man-city. By linking human birth, "a nine months' wonder," to God's creation of the earth out of chaos, Williams provides a mock universality for the birth of his hero and his poem Paterson. He also provides the city with an identity that can include opposing states of existence within either one man or a community; lack of commas suggests that the drunk is also sober and the illustrious man is also gross, a reconciliation of opposites suspiciously akin to that favorite pastime of the philosophical poets. Finally, Williams concludes the stanza with lines which indicate how such syntheses can undo themselves, thus adding another touch of mockery. The three final lines are an abbreviated version of an early passage in Williams' longer manuscript.
The earlier passage openly burlesques the ambiguity of philosophical discourse.

The subtlties of stupidity become the stupidity of subtlties - for you cannot leave so fast that you will return before you have gone. The craft dissected by thought, philosophers have nowhere to turn but to the writing of stale poems. Each to fulfill itself of the other rolling up or does not and is never full, the informed, the ignorant, one the half of the other, unwilling to give or unable or - does not get equal parts. Each segment of the other, rolling up, cockeyed dispersing, and twelfth and twentieth and five millionth, half is twentieth and all not one unless by halves - otherwise unposed. 12

The uncut passage contains Williams' synthesis of knowledge and ignorance as a burlesque of Eliot's composite paradoxes. The travel imagery combined with the exaggerated synthesis suggest a passage from "East Coker."

You say I am repeating Something I have said before. I shall say it again. Shall I say it again? In order to arrive there, To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not, You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance, In order to possess what you do not possess You must go by the way of dispossession. In order to arrive at what you are not You must go through the way in which you are not. And what you do not know is the only thing you know And what you own is what you do not own And where you are is where you are not. 13

Eliot's passage presents renunciation of ecstasy and return to childish innocence as a means of achieving religious grace, the most complete form of knowledge. Williams' parody not only ignores the importance of metaphysical knowledge but suggests that mere philosophical
attempts to reconcile opposites can result in a poet's "own undoing." As if to emphasize the point that his own poem, though also packed with details, will not be soured by philosophical ambiguity and can therefore be relevant to contemporary life and letters, Williams adds another stanza depicting philosophical poetry and its pitfalls.

(The multiple seed, packed tight with detail, soured, is lost in the flux and the mind, distracted, floats off in the same scum) (4)

By 1944, Williams must have viewed Wallace Stevens' Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction as a poem similar to Eliot's Four Quartets, for he redrafted his earlier burlesque of "East Coker" to serve as a warning to Stevens. Even before Notes appeared, Marianne Moore had suggested a relationship between Eliot and Stevens, and in 1942, reviewers of Stevens' Parts of a World speculated about categorizing Stevens as a philosophical poet. Notes certainly appeared to be a philosophical poem, and it dealt with many of the same questions Eliot addressed in Four Quartets although Stevens was a humanist who depicted man as creating his own myths whereas Eliot had attempted to synthesize many myths into an updated version of Christianity.

Stevens opens his long poem by using the creation of Phoebus to illustrate the creation of myth. He insists a novice poet should "become an ignorant man again/ And see the sun again with an ignorant eye." Such a beginning may well have reminded Williams of Eliot's "way of
ignorance," for he appears to have combined the two concepts to develop the "ignorant sun" of his Preface. He continues with a reference to the cycle of life and death, a favorite philosophical theme, but one that can lead to stale poetry.

It is the ignorant sun
rising in the slot of
hollow suns risen, so that never in this
world will a man live well in his body
save dying--and not know himself
dying; yet that is
the design. Renews himself
thereby, in addition and subtraction,
walking up and down.

and the craft,
subverted by thought, rolling up, let
him beware lest he turn to no more than
the writing of stale poems . . .
Minds like beds always made up,
(more stony than a shore)
unwilling or unable. (4)

Williams' "ignorant sun" is more than a laugh at one of the major images in Stevens' poetry. The "ignorant sun" can also be read as an ignorant literary son rising in the wake of his progenitor's hollowness, with "hollow suns" echoing Eliot's "Hollow Men."

Since both Four Quartets and Notes had been written during World War II, both Eliot and Stevens had speculated in their poems about war and death. Eliot chose to reject the "pattern" imposed by knowledge of experience in favor of an emphasis on spiritual grace to give meaning to life and death, even death in war. Stevens concluded his poem by relating the poet's war between imagination and reality to war in which a soldier dies. The poet creates fictions
which give purpose to both death and life: "How gladly with proper words the soldier dies,/ If he must, or lives on the bread of faithful speech." Although Williams does not mention war, he plays on the traditional cycle of life and death by relating it to the cycle of the ignorant sun/son. "The design" therefore refers both to the normal cycle of life and death and the cycle of one ignorant poet following another. When Williams further depicts the sun/son renewing himself "in addition and subtraction, walking up and down," he also echoes an important quotation from Herakleitos which Eliot elaborated on in "The Dry Salvages" and used in Greek as one of the epigraphs for his entire poem: "And the way up is the way down, the way forward is the way backward." Walking up and down may imply continual renewal, but it also suggests a round of philosophical ambiguity which leads nowhere. Williams' explicit statement of the danger in following Eliot is left for the next stanza where he warns the ignorant son or any follower of Eliot to "beware" lest he "turn to no more than/ the writing of stale poems."

It is important to note that the satiric aspect of these parodies is directed mainly toward Eliot. Williams and Stevens had been friends since the 1913 through 1916 period when Williams had worked on Others magazine and Stevens had been a contributor. During their careers, the two had written about each other and had occasionally corresponded with each other. Williams' essays and letters
indicate respect for both Stevens' critical abilities and his poetry. It was, however, Stevens who inadvertently had pinned the tag "anti-poetic" to Williams' poetry. Paterson would demonstrate that no material is antipoetic, that real experience must be admitted to poetry or the genre would die from overexposure to useless erudition. Given this perspective, Williams probably enjoyed warning his friend against writing stale poems. The warning is friendly, a kind of bossiness that Williams would later treat with good humor in a fragment of prose, a fragment that fits in with the satiric substructure Williams creates in Book One. 20

Like the literary parody of the Preface, many characters in Book One function through double entendre to become part of Williams' satiric substructure. In the opening pages, two giants become local deities, demonstrate Williams' ability to create myth as successfully as any poet and simultaneously undercut Eliot's myth-making poetry. When the giant Paterson takes his place among historic characters from the city's past, he allegorically becomes Williams competing with other literary giants. Thus, the giants of Book One serve several purposes and wear several guises.

Paterson is the first giant in Book One. Formed of rock and water, he "lies in the valley under the Passaic Falls," the anthropomorphic incarnation of a city. But Paterson is asleep. The people of the city, like the
giant, are "unroused" and function as "automatons" because they are unable to hear. They have no poet to "unravel" the common language, the language which must be "combed into straight lines/ from that rafter of a rock's/ lip."

Williams' uses of rock and water imagery as both real elements of a real geographic area and as fresh new metaphors for an indigenous culture and the language to depict that culture are particularly significant. Both uses distinguish his poetic practices from Eliot's. Williams will imaginatively find meaning in his immediate environment rather than resort to either traditional imagery or accepted symbolism.

Eliot had used traditional rock and water imagery in *The Waste Land* to suggest the barrenness of modern life. By the mid-forties, poetry readers and professors all over America were familiar with the sterility symbolized by rocks without water as part of "What the thunder said:"

If there were water

And no rock
If there were rock
And also water
And water
A spring
A pool among the rock
If there were the sound of water only
Not the cicada
And dry grass singing
But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop drop
But there is no water.

Williams offers an ironic and creative solution to the drought in this well-known passage. He creates a local
anthropomorphic deity of rock and water and also uses the sound of water over a rock as the major metaphor for a living language.

After Eliot had accepted Anglo-Catholicism, he used rock and water imagery in "Ash Wednesday," and the water was associated specifically with spiritual regeneration, Eliot's answer to modern sterility. Finally, in his Christian pageant The Rock, Eliot embraced the traditional religious symbol of the eternal church as his answer to a world which needs specific values. Williams was undoubtedly aware of all these uses of rock and water by Eliot, for his own very different use of the same images could underscore his major difference from Eliot. For Williams, an American language which would lead to a new metric and a new national poetry would do more to regenerate the local and national sense of purpose than any spiritual rebirth. Williams had been thwarted in his promotion of such ideas in part by the popularity of Eliot's poetry and the continuing emphasis on the mythic approach to literature which began in The Waste Land. In Paterson, he would demonstrate his search for a new language and American culture and would belittle those poets who blocked him.

Paterson is more than a local deity; he is also a "man—like a city." As Williams turns from the anthropomorphic element of his giant to the human element, he employs parodic echoes and double entendre which put his rock and water imagery into a humorous context and stress
the mock heroic nature of his giant. Williams was probably playing on the overworked metaphor of the stream of consciousness when he made Paterson's thoughts analogous to the very waterfall that formed part of the giant's body.

Jostled as are the waters approaching the brink, his thoughts interlace, repel and cut under, rise rock-thwarted and turn aside but forever strain forward—or strike an eddy and whirl, marked by a leaf or curdy spume, seeming to forget.

Retake later the advance and are replaced by succeeding hordes pushing forward—they coalesce now glass-smooth with their swiftness, quiet or seem to quiet as at the close they leap to the conclusion and fall, fall in air! as if floating, relieved of their weight, split apart, ribbons; dazed, drunk with the catastrophe of the descent floating unsupported to hit the rocks: to a thunder, as if lightning had struck (7, 8)

In the first eight lines, the passage vividly describes rushing water and aptly depicts the intricacies of a functioning mind. When Paterson's personified thoughts regroup, however, like a suicidal band of invaders and "leap to a conclusion," the passage becomes humorous. When his thoughts "fall...drunk/with the catastrophe of the descent...to hit the rocks, to a thunder/as if lightning had struck," the analogy to mental processes becomes exaggerated to the point of burlesque. The passage, however, is more than a burlesque. Not only do the combination of rocks, water, thunder and lightning parody the high serious of "What the thunder said" in *The Waste Land*, but when
Paterson's thoughts are "rock-thwarted," and later "hit the rocks," they may well be mounting an attack on both *The Waste Land* and Eliot's religious pageant, *The Rock*.

In Eliot's religious pageant, The Rock is actually a character who carries on a poetic dialogue with a chorus of sixteen stone-like figures whose costumes make them appear to be growing out of the hill of rock on which they stand. The dialogue introduces scenes from the history of the London Church, and the entire pageant depicts man's continuing need for the church in all ages. The Rock's abstract character serves several purposes in the beginning of the pageant, but all are associated with traditional church symbolism. The Rock can represent the Eternal Church founded upon a rock as well as Christ, himself, who is metaphorically referred to in I Cor. 10:4 as "The Rock." By the close of the pageant, however, Eliot identifies The Rock as a representation of St. Peter, of whom Christ had said, "On this Rock will I build my Church." Thus, *The Rock*, both as symbol and as pageant, was Eliot's dramatic assertion of Christianity as a force in the modern world. Williams, however, believed Christianity was an outdated anthropomorphic myth.

One way to demolish an old myth is by ridicule and another is by replacing it with a new myth: Williams does both. By lifting his own anthropomorphic giant to mythical proportions which rival the Christian myth, Williams suggests that one myth is as good as another and that a local
myth may even be superior. In addition, the giant city-man has amorous inclinations and a female companion. By creating two giants, one male and one female, Williams undercuts not only Eliot's Christian myth but also the earlier fertility myths Eliot had explored in *The Waste Land*. Williams' giants struggle toward fertility in Books One and Two, but their search for love gradually becomes associated with a more human search, a search which requires new discoveries in language. By Book Four, the anthropomorphic giants have been abandoned as both myths and metaphors, to be replaced by an emphasis on science, Williams' version of the new twentieth century myth. When Williams abandons his own anthropomorphic myth to turn to the myth of science, he suggests that his poem truly belongs to the twentieth century whereas Eliot's poems do not.

Replacement of Eliot's myths, however, is not the only device Williams uses to undermine Eliot's poems. When compared to Eliot's Rock, Williams' *Paterson* is far too humorous to be considered heroic. Even though his first appearance lyrically associates him with the people of his city and elevates him as a mysterious force in the lives of the citizens, Williams adds a mock heroic touch when "Butterflies settle on his stone ear." When Paterson's thoughts take their drunken plunge over the falls, Williams sets the scene for a later drunken plunge by the historic local braggart, Sam Patch. Finally, the city-man will become raucously human when he urinates in Book One and when an
observation tower becomes the giant phallus of this city-giant in Book Two. Williams' anthropomorphic giant has a Rabelaisian coarseness which relates him to the capricious gods of Ancient Greece and which identifies him as a mock-heroic character. Furthermore, Paterson embraces a blossoming mountain woman made of "colored crystals," with "pearls at her ankles," and whose "monstrous hair" stretches into "the back country" where "the wood-duck nests." She lies "facing him, his arm supporting her, by the Valley of the Rocks, asleep." By placing his amorous but unroused giants by the Valley of the Rocks, which is italicized for emphasis, Williams invites a comparison between his two rock figures and the character from Eliot's play, The Rock. Although Williams' impressive lyrical talent creates two appealing giants, his wit adds a dimension for readers who will look beyond the "myth-making power" Williams had once been accused of lacking.

In addition to placing his giants beside Eliot's Christian myth, Williams begins a series of satiric portraits immediately after the passage depicting Paterson's piss.

And derivatively, for the Great Falls, PISS-AGH! the giant lets fly! good Muncie, too

They craved the miraculous! (10)

These lines are filled with implications for the prose passages which complete the opening section of Book One. Not only does the giant become humorously human when a pun on
the name Passaic turns his urine to a waterfall, but the waterfall will add to Williams' depiction of great literary falls, falls allegorized in prose passages taken in part from historic documents about the city of Paterson. Literary falls by E. E. Cummings, Hart Crane and Ezra Pound will be depicted several pages later when Sarah Cumming and Sam Patch leap to their deaths and Sam Crane's bridge topples into the river. The major literary fall, however, will evolve slowly throughout the course of the poem and will never require an actual leap over the falls. T. S. Eliot's literary demise begins with the first historic fragment describing "the miraculous" qualities early Paterson inhabitants craved and which readers and literary critics may still crave. Eliot is disguised as a famous dwarf from colonial history.

Though unnamed in this first prose segment about him, Pieter the dwarf is called a "monster in human form" and is undoubtedly the hydrocephalic or waterhead of Williams' much earlier "Doc and Willie" manuscript. In that manuscript, the dwarf appeared to represent Pound and possibly Eliot by extension but by 1944, Pieter had become Eliot. A large quantity of information about Pieter, also called "Big-headed Peter," was available to Williams in the early forties. At least two sources quote the Revolutionary Officer's account which Williams uses verbatim except for slight changes in capitalization and the use of italics.
It is easy to see why Williams could have associated this particular fragment with Eliot.

Eliot's intellectuality is satirized by the dwarf's inability to "support the enormous weight of his head," but it is the dwarf's interest in religion which finally pins down the identification. The dwarf, who is a "natural curiosity," is "visited by great numbers of people, and is peculiarly fond of the company of clergymen, always inquiring for them among his visitors, and taking great pleasure in receiving religious instruction" (10). Eliot's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism was, to Williams, the beginning of his poetic downfall. Also like Eliot, the dwarf is acquainted with illustrious persons, for even General Washington has made him a visit and inquired "whether he was a Whig or a Tory." The dwarf claims to have taken no "active part" on either side, and Williams retains the original italics to indicate irony in this disclaimer. By the mid-forties, Eliot's political attitudes had been well established, particularly through his essay "The Idea of a Christian Society." In this essay, Eliot proposed the need for a close alliance between church and state but also professed himself unconcerned with the political forms of a Christian society. For anyone who followed Eliot's career as closely as Williams, it would not have been difficult to see the potential allegory in the historic account of Peter the dwarf.
After the prose fragment introducing the yet-unnamed dwarf, Williams added a line which stands apart from the smaller type in which the prose has been set: "A wonder! A wonder!" This expression is more than an exclamation at the dwarf's spectacular qualities; it is a unifying device which connects the dwarf to Sam Patch. The expression is also used in the poetic insert which separates the story of Patch and Crane from the tale of Patch's fatal leap. In the second reference, however, Williams calls "the water pouring still/ from the edge of the rock . . . / A wonder." Since the passage associates Patch and Crane with Williams' language theme, Paterson's search for a language becomes as miraculous as the dwarf.

The process by which Williams came to associate Peter the Dwarf with Eliot can best be traced through early manuscripts of the poem in which Williams also used "a wonder" to unify his material. Before Williams wrote the outline of his four-book poem and relegated his minister to Book Two, the minister's sermon was designed to represent a metaphorical leap over the falls and into the stream of language. The sermon also was to be associated to leaps by Sam Patch and Sarah Cumming by being called "A Wonder! A wonder in the woods." At this time, the minister's brief sermon concluded with a benediction "In the name of the Father and his Blessed Son/ Who died for you upon the cross of wood." The interplay of "Wonder in the woods" and "cross of wood" within a religious context are enough to
allude to the title of Eliot's early essays, *The Sacred Wood*, and the minister's metaphorical plunge over the falls is enough to associate him with Williams' language theme. Only later did Williams decide not to place Eliot on a par with Pound in Book One but rather to contrast the two poets as differing aspects of the miraculous. When Williams decided to move the minister to Book Two, he probably planned to associate the minister with the dwarf by calling the minister "A Wonder," for the early passage about the minister was retained through a fairly late draft of Book Two.

In the final version of *Paterson*, the minister does represent Eliot but also, by extension, he represents an evangelical nature in other poets with a single-minded commitment. Also in the final version, the minister and the dwarf are brought together in Paterson's mind during a moment of anger, a moment when Paterson suffers a strange metamorphosis and "his voice is drowned under the falls" (83). Thus, Eliot as an intellectual poet with a Christian message prevents Paterson's, or Williams', voice from being heard. Not until the dwarf is dead in Book Four will Paterson be saved.

At one point, Williams also considered using part of Book Three as a meditation on the minister's sermon. One fragment of the meditation shows how Williams considered
his language theme as a direct challenge to Eliot and also how he associated Peter the dwarf with Eliot's Peter the rock.

Let this be a stone in your crop
the unformed language:
and within the rock, entrapped
cupped, when broken, like two hands
holding the crystal, red and blue (Peter
the rock. Gnaw on that,
your meat, the language, the
unformed language — caught
and held

Williams never included this fragment, but he did include in Book Four a fragment of prose depicting Peter's grave as a windup to the allegorical interpretation of Peter's story.

In Book Four, Pieter the waterhead is finally identified by name as Peter the dwarf who can be associated with the St. Peter of Eliot's religious pageant. In this account, Peter's remains are found in the cellar of an old church with the body buried separately from the head which is now only "an enormous skull" reminiscent of the large-headed monster of Book One and the "glabrous skull" (63) of the minister in Book Two. These details support an identity of Peter and the minister as Eliot, the intellectual poet who proclaimed Christianity anew. Significantly, the body is removed "to make room for a new furnace." The allegorical significance of this furnace also appears in Book Four where Williams introduces Madame Curie's discovery of radium as a major metaphor for new discoveries in science, economics and language. It will be the poet's
task to work with the new twentieth century furnace rather than with Eliot's old mythology. When the dwarf's body is removed from the church to make room for a new furnace, Williams suggests that Eliot's Christianity has been replaced by a new mode of thought. For Williams, the new science should have a vital relationship to new poetry. In any given era, the poetic forms must mirror the age in which they are written.

Williams attempted to clarify the relationships of a people's myths to their society and their poetic forms in an essay written in 1947 and published in *Touchstone*, January 1948.27

Look! the fixed overall quality of all poems of the past was a plainly understandable counting. The lines were measured and in general evenly arranged— to reveal a similar orderliness of thought and behavior in the general pattern of their day. Such measures (notice the word) were synonymous with a society, uniform, and made up of easily measurable integers, racial and philosophic. The arts were of that world aristocratic and, as time went on, Christian. Thus there was a correlation between the world as it stood politically and philosophically and the form of the poem that represented it— notably so in Dante's terza rima.

But how, today, shall a Christian address a sonnet, in form, to a Jew or a Negro? It might have an ironic meaning but little more than that. . . But the greatest genius of our day is a Jew. He has invented a different counting. It would be a stupid insult to Einstein to write him a sonnet. We do not live in a sonnet world; we do not live even in an iambic world; certainly we do not live in a world of iambic pentameters. . . such things are out of place for us today, and, if we haven't the wit to see it quite apart from discovering the inventiveness we should possess to go beyond that, then let us be the shallow artists our work for the most part shows us to be.
But again an objection: Everything of the past’s artistic forms shows such forms to have been related to an anthropomorphic myth in which we gravely believed. Today we have little more of that.

Today a far more comprehensive myth has absorbed our beliefs—Science. But when I say science is a myth I disturb the good man and the scientist equally. But we have moved from the position of having our gods on the mountain in our back yards to the acceptance of the probability of the very non-existence of matter as such... shall our poetic forms not show it?

With such an attitude, Williams could hardly have completed an entire poem as the full development of a new anthropomorphic myth. He had to turn to science, the new myth. In both Books Three and Four, the anthropomorphic aspects of the giant Paterson give way to Paterson, the man-poet. Williams does indeed create myth in Paterson, but in each book he carefully controls the kind of myth he creates.

A letter to Williams which concludes the second section of Book One challenges him to accept his own responsibility and avoid a cleavage between literature and life. In this letter, Williams is urged to "submit to your own myths, and that any postponement in doing so is a lie for you" (29). Williams' own myth involved a literary victory over Eliot, a victory to be achieved both through the comic creation of anthropomorphic giants in his own back yard and the simultaneous creation of literary giants.

Though Eliot is the first allegorized literary giant to compete with Paterson in Book One, three others intermingle with Paterson in the last four pages of the opening
section: E. E. Cummings, Hart Crane and Ezra Pound.

Cummings, Crane and Pound, like Eliot, are allegorically disguised as historic characters related to the city and the falls. Williams joins them as Paterson, Pound's literary son and the only one of the four who will fully survive his leap into the stream of language.

E. E. Cummings is the first literary giant to be actually associated with the metaphorical stream of language Williams creates from the Passaic falls. Cummings appears as a married couple, Sarah Cumming and her husband, Hopper Cumming, a minister from Newark. The minister represents two qualities Williams recognized in Cummings' work. In his 1946 essay, "Lower Case Cummings," Williams noted, "The drunk, the whore, the child, are typical cummings heroes. (Is that Deacon Cummings speaking? Probably.)" Such moralism can be associated with Hopper Cumming when he appears as the minister "to supply . . . a destitute congregation." Williams also suggests in his essay that Cummings should not "be held too closely to account for some of his doodles, his fiddling with the paraphernalia of the writing game." Such fiddling refers to poems in which Cummings breaks up words into syllables or letters and combines groups of words into nonstop expressions. One such early poem had appeared in Contact back in the thirties when Williams briefly attempted to revive the magazine; Cummings had fiddled in this poem with letters and syllables of the word grasshopper until the poem itself
appeared to hop across the page. The grasshopper poem surely must have prompted Williams to rename the historic Hooper Cumming as "Hopper" Cumming. Neither Cummings' fiddling nor his moralism, however, had been the only reason why Williams declared at the beginning of his essay, "ee cummings means my language."

Instead, Williams admired the way Cummings adapted old words to new contexts to convey an acceptance of and joy in his environment, even the area around his apartment in New York City. To Williams, this meant discovering both a new language and the life which that language represents:

cummings is the living presence of the drive to make all our convictions evident by penetrating through their costumes to the living flesh of the matter. He avoids the cliche' first by avoiding the whole accepted modus of english. He does it, not to be "popular," God knows, nor to sell anything, but to lay bare the actual experience of love, let us say, in the chance terms which his environment happens to make apparent to him. He does it to reveal, to disclose, to free man from habit. Habit is our continual enemy as artists and as men.

This use of words to depict a living experience of love describes the element in Cummings' work which Williams himself was seeking. In Cummings' poems, Williams sees a drive similar to his own toward new modes of expression which are distinctly American and are therefore a step toward discovering specifically American values. When Sarah Cumming falls or leaps into the Passaic River, she is enticed by such discovery. The words which follow her disappearance over the falls refer both to the prose which reports her story and the reason for her fall: "A false
language. A true. A false language pouring—language (misunderstood) pouring (misinterpreted) without dignity, without minister, crashing upon a stone ear" (15). The language "without minister" is more than a pun on Sarah's departure from her husband, for it is also the language which the American poet must understand and interpret. Cummings, in some of his work, makes just such an attempt; thus, he qualifies at least as a partial leaper into the stream of language. Though Sarah Cumming is killed by her leap or fall, Hopper returns to his home at Newark.

When Book One went to press, it appeared that Williams had plans for playing with the name Hopper. He had already decided to incorporate a flight of grasshoppers as "couriers" or "outriders" to announce Paterson's coming. In his earliest handwritten notes, grasshopper is written as two words, and Williams instructs himself, "Love, the grass hopper—combats the sleep of their ways." In an early draft of Book Two, Williams includes "grass-hoppers," now sometimes hyphenated, as contributors to the many voices in the air, voices which compete with the minister's harangue. Williams also first introduces the red basalt grasshopper which is "articulate, the voice only surviving." At this point, the grasshoppers appear to represent both nature and art, both the natural world and the art world which, when they are in harmony, can speak to man.

Because Williams had taken the trouble to change his Book One character's name to Hopper Cumming and because the
grasshoppers appear to represent love for a living environment and an attempt to express that environment, it appears that Williams intended an association between his literary giant E. E. Cummings and the grasshoppers. But Williams had trouble with the grasshopper passages. He modified them and then modified the modifications. In the final version of Book Two, the grasshoppers still serve as "couriers to the ceremonial of love" (48) and by their "churring song" can still be considered voices of nature and of love. Even the red basalt grasshopper which finally becomes a relic in Paterson's mind, "begins churring!" (49) Ironically, however, the grasshoppers and their music, like the other voices of the park, go unnoticed by the Sunday crowd. Paterson struggles to catch a particular accent in the voices which surround him, but he cannot sort out the voices. The grasshoppers, like the language of the falls, can only be heard in dreams. Though they announce Paterson's coming, they cannot communicate to him. The grasshoppers of love fail as surely as Sarah Cumming's leap had failed.

As Book Two draws to a close, Williams borrows a technique from E. E. Cummings to explain the failure. In a passage with words designed to look like the falls over which she plunged, Sarah's fall is recapitulated.
She was married with empty words:
   better to
   stumble at
   the edge
   to fall
   fall
   and be

   --divorced

from the insistence of place--
   from knowledge,

from learning--the terms
foreign, conveying no immediacy, pouring down.

   --divorced

from time (no invention more), bald as an
egg

   and leaped (or fell) without a
language, tongue-tied
   the language worn out . (83-84)

E. E. Cummings' work contained some of the elements
Williams admired, but Cummings had not sufficiently pulled
together his language experiments and his love of the
American scene into any coherent poetics for other American
poets. Sarah's fall seems to illustrate a divorce in
Cummings' work which prevented this literary giant from
surviving in the stream of language.

Because references to Eliot and Cummings are conveyed
through double entendre and are related to an allegorical
reading of Book One, Williams could be fairly sure their
identities would not be noted when Book Two was published
in a single volume. No reader of Book One had mentioned
either Eliot or Cummings in relation to "the monster in
human form" or Hopper Cumming. No one had seen Pound in
Sam Patch, and even Hart Crane, most obvious of the satirical literary giants, had not been identified in 1947.\(^{35}\)

Hart Crane and Ezra Pound appear as Tim Crane and Sam Patch in a long historic account of the first attempt to bridge the Passaic falls. Although Williams would have found information about Sam Patch in several sources, he chose the one which associated Patch with Crane, selected and arranged segments which he could use verbatim to achieve the emphasis he wanted, then incorporated other details into a prose segment he himself composed. His source for the material is *A Little Story of Old Paterson* by Charles Pitman Longwell. Most of the material about Patch and Crane comes from Chapter Five though Williams did transfer a few important details from other chapters.\(^{36}\)

Even more significant is what Williams omitted and what he added. Most material which couldn't possibly be related to Ezra Pound and Hart Crane was dropped. Williams added instead an entire segment to introduce his language theme and condense the material concluding Patch's story.

Williams opens his account with a quotation that begins in the middle of a paragraph two-thirds of the way into Longwell's fifth chapter. By this means he stresses the most significant event, "everything made in readiness to pull the clumsy bridge into position" (10). The significance of this clumsy bridge becomes apparent when the reader learns "the happiest man in the town that day was
Timothy B. Crane who had charge of the bridge." At this point, the clumsy bridge also becomes Hart Crane's poem *The Bridge*.

By the time he compiled Book One, Williams probably had read Philip Horton's 1937 biography of Crane. In the biography, Horton uses letters from Crane to indicate Crane's admiration for Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* but also his dislike of its negative implications. Crane's answer to Eliot's early pessimism had been a kind of naive and optimistic mysticism. Horton attributed Crane's mysticism to his heavy drinking. As early as 1939, Williams was associating Eliot and Crane as poets who "want to speak directly to the soul and its difficulties."

It is impossible to know exactly when Williams saw the possibility of associating Tim Crane with Hart Crane, but the details Williams carefully selected and arranged for his historic narrative can be read allegorically. Tim Crane's occupation as tavern keeper certainly suggests an identity with Hart Crane, the heavy drinker. Also, since Tim Crane built the bridge to prevent his rival tavern keeper from getting advantage of the hundred steps on the other side of the falls, Williams could have seen this as Crane's poem preventing his rival Eliot from getting an advantage in the area of mystical poetry. When Crane was finishing *The Bridge*, Eliot published "Ash Wednesday," his own mystical answer to his earlier doubts and skepticism. "Ash Wednesday" presents a spiritual ascension depicted in
part by the image of climbing a spiral staircase. Lest readers should miss the association, Williams included not only the term "Jacob's Ladder" which appears in Chapter Five of his source but also the terms "hundred steps" and "long rustic winging stairs" which had to be transferred from the previous chapter. In Paterson, the "long, rustic, winding stair" which benefits Fyfield, Crane's competitor, parodies the circular staircase of "Ash Wednesday" and further suggests that Eliot's religion is just another version of Crane's drunken mysticism. Both are belittled by comparison. When Crane's "clumsy bridge" topples into the Passaic River, an entire mystical approach to poetry topples.

Williams makes another association with Eliot's work when a "wooden pin" causes Crane's bridge to topple. Crane had been an early disciple of Eliot's poetic theories. Williams' "wooden" bridge and "wooden" pin are similar to the use of wood in poetic fragments found in early manuscripts, fragments which also appear to be associated with Eliot. Williams apparently wanted to play on the title of Eliot's earliest book of criticism, The Sacred Wood. Naturally, it is Patch, therefore Pound, who rescues the "wooden pin" which has slipped and caused Crane's bridge to topple. Pound, in the twenties, had done more than any other man to promote Eliot's work. Pound had also exerted an early influence on Crane, but Crane turned to Eliot after publication of The Waste Land boosted him to
prominence as a spokesman for an entire generation and as a literary innovator. By allowing Pound, as Patch, to rescue the underpinnings of Crane's bridge, Williams suggests that Pound has been able to separate the basic values of Eliot's criticism from the more clumsy and worthless aspects. Therefore, Pound, not Crane, is the real hero of the twenties and thirties. Like Patch, however, the heroic Pound becomes a victim of his own bravado. Although Patch leaps successfully into the stream of language, he is ultimately destroyed as surely as Crane's clumsy bridge.

Patch first enters the Crane fragment as a resident of Paterson described by the narrator as "my boss" who "many a time . . . gave me a cuff over the ears" (16). Pound's letters to Williams contain many literary cuffs and Williams' letters to others indicate his frequent exasperation over them. By the time he compiled Book One, Williams had decided to envision Pound as a teacher and literary father to Paterson, but only a father who would influence Paterson in his youth. Although the term boss and fatherly cuffs are appropriate for suggesting Pound's attitude toward Williams, they are also ironic, for the father will leap to his literary death in Book One while the son escapes.

Pound's bragging is used with particular significance in the Patch fragment. Patch has boasted so frequently that he would jump over the falls that he has been "placed under arrest at various times" and "had previously been
locked up in the basement under the bank with a bad case of
delirium tremens." Again, at this point, Williams departed
from the chapter which was his major source to transfer
from another chapter the detail that the jail was located
under the bank. 40 By 1946, references to imprisonment
would suggest Pound's incarceration at St. Elizabeth's Hos­
pital, but being locked up in the basement of a bank also
suggests an arrest in Pound's literary progress as a result
of his single-minded concern with money systems and their
relationship to evil in the world. Furthermore, Pound's
incarceration under a bank could suggest still another
arrest in his development at the time of his close associa­
tion with Eliot, the days when Eliot had worked in a bank.

Though Williams no doubt enjoyed the hidden humor in a
comparison of Patch's career with Pound's, Pound's real
literary value to Williams had revolved around his early
proclamations regarding imagism and his experimentation
with the poetic line. Pound had first stimulated Williams'的兴趣 in colloquial language and had prompted Williams
to abandon metrics which simulated a metronome. Throughout
his life, no matter how angry Williams became about Pound's
political or economic foolishness, he respected Pound's use
of the poetic line. Pound was therefore the perfect figure
to make early successful leaps into Williams' stream of
language. Even Pound could not survive, however, and
Williams needed to manipulate his historic material to
indicate why.
One way Williams manipulated his material was to associate Tim Crane with Sam Patch by comparing them. By changing the name of Sam Pope in his original source to Sam Patch in his own version, Williams related his two heroes. After describing Crane's physical appearance, Williams continues, "He was well known to the other citizens as a man of much energy and no little ability. In his manner, he resembled the large, rugged stature of Sam Patch." In addition to associating the two literary giants this way, Williams gives a prominent position to Patch's boast, "Now, old Tim Crane thinks he has done something great, but I can beat him." Hart Crane had given American history a central place in *The Bridge* long before Pound began introducing massive amounts of American history into *The Cantos*. Williams, however, believed Pound's effective inclusion of actual letters from John Adams and Thomas Jefferson was far more daring than Crane's symbolic use of history.

Williams manipulated his material even more by composing the final prose fragment which depicts Patch's and Pound's demise. As Patch leaves his native area and jumps into other streams, his fame increases just as Pound's fame had increased as he moved from his native country to England, from England to France and from France to Italy. As his fame increases, Patch takes to speech-making before each plunge into a new stream, and people travel great distances "to see the wonder." Finally, away from home territory, speech fails Patch after "the word had been drained
from its meaning." Patch plunges to his death when his words no longer have meaning just as Pound had plunged to his literary death as a result of meaningless speech-making on behalf of the Fascists over the Italian broadcasting system. When Book One appeared, Pound's literary death seemed certain, but Pound had prepared the way for Williams as surely as Patch prepares the way for Noah F. Paterson.

Williams, as Paterson, joins the Cummings, Crane and Pound allegory by way of a flamboyant billboard placed strategically between prose fragments. Immediately following the prose account of Sarah Cumming's fall are seven lines of poetry which tie Sarah's plunge to Patch's fatal plunge and ascribe both deaths to the lack of a proper language. Significantly, the lines conclude with a favorite statement by Patch which also offers Williams' justification for the satire in his poem: "Some things can be done as well as others." A stanza that begins by questioning language concludes with double entendre, a challenge made by Patch but followed by Paterson.

A false language. A true. A false language pouring—a language (misunderstood) pouring (misinterpreted) without dignity, without minister, crashing upon a stone ear. At least it settled it for her. Patch too, as a matter of fact. He became a national hero in '28, '29 and toured the country diving from cliffs and masts, rocks and bridges—to prove his thesis: Some things can be done as well as others.
"Jersey Lightning" to the boys. (15)

Immediately preceding the Patch and Crane fragment, this interjected announcement demonstrates Williams' sense of humor. In the opening pages, Paterson's thoughts had plunged drunkenly over the falls "to hit the rocks: to a thunder,/ as if lightning had struck." Now Paterson is featured as a local hero who has been drinking "Jersey Lightning," the local applejack or cider brandy, a popular alcoholic drink, particularly during Prohibition years. This illustrious drunken giant will survive where other literary giants have fallen to their deaths. His full name provides hints both to his literary lineage and his methods of survival.

Noah, Paterson's first name, suggests the Biblical Noah and his survival of the flood; Paterson survives the flood of language. Noah also suggests Noah Webster, whom Mencken had cited as one of the earliest Americans to insist on a distinctly American language. Like Webster, Paterson seeks the historic beginnings of American, welcoming both the polyglot contributions of immigrants and the native contributions of aboriginal Indians.

Paterson also survives in part because as Faitoute, he does all. The name Faitoute has an interesting history.
At an early stage in his plans for the poem, Williams intended to graphically present the Paterson falls as a flow of undecipherable language, recording ideas from varied sources: history, sociology, politics, economics, philosophy and mythology. He had learned the technique of interrelating diverse areas of thought through the strange letters of David Lyle. Lyle was a resident of Paterson who sought a new method of communication by correlating disparate ideas and events taken from published writings and incorporating them into letters which he then mailed to many authors unknown to each other and in divergent fields. Williams received Lyle's letters all through the decade of the forties and may have recognized in them some similarity to Pound's ideographic method of correlating knowledge in The Cantos. At one time, he may have intended to use Lyle's letters as a way of parodying the vast quantities of knowledge in Pound's long poem. Williams first wrote to Laughlin about Lyle's role in Paterson in July of 1942:

Yesterday I went to Paterson for a contact I've delayed making, a man I've written to but never seen, David Lyle. A strange character, fits marvelously into my material both personally and symbolically... Has read everything on God's earth, including poetry, Whitehead and so many others I was dizzy. But I gotta throw him, somehow. I know how those British generals in Lybia must have felt facing Rommel.

Three days later Williams prepared a manuscript from Lyle's letters addressed to "Dear Noah" and signed "D. Joseph Faitoute" rather than David Joseph Lyle. He sent it to a typist with instructions to "run it all
together in one tumbling stream by using caps or italics for special picking out of especially noteworthy bits."\footnote{44}

The manuscript never became part of \textit{Paterson}, although Williams did decide to envision the Passaic falls as a flow of undecipherable and unintelligible language. Williams also decided to use the name Faitoute, meaning does all, as the middle name for his heroic and humorous giant, who appears as Faitoute in Book Two.

The name is appropriate. Throughout \textit{Paterson}, Williams does all that Eliot, Pound and Crane have done, then discovers beyond them. He creates myth as successful as the myths Eliot had used, then abandons anthropomorphic myth for scientific metaphors. He incorporates history as effectively as Pound but uses it for dual purposes. He celebrates the American landscape as enthusiastically as Crane even as he recognizes the industrial deformity associated with it. As he writes knowingly of his own locality, he develops an allegory as rich in literary allusions as work by Eliot or Pound. The allegory is personal and contemporary. It tells the story of Williams and his fellow poets of the twentieth century, of his need to separate himself from them in order to develop an appropriate poetics for America. Many of Williams' literary allusions have gone unnoticed, or if noted, have not been tied to the larger allegory that pervades \textit{Paterson}. But Williams knew what he wanted to do even when he wasn't sure exactly how to do it. The name Faitoute is one more clew to the
fullness of Williams' multidimensional poem. Williams, as the giant Paterson, survives in part because he does all.

Paterson finally survives his plunge into the stream of language because he knows what to accept from his literary father and what to reject. The very name Paterson combines pater and son, father and son. "P for short" suggests that the name can also be shortened to Patch, thus to Pound. In section three of Book One, Williams uses the letter P, to introduce a quotation from Pound. "Your interest is in the bloody loam but what I'm after is the finished Product" (37). On a literal level, the quotation refers to Williams' preference for the raw materials of his poem rather than a perfected work of art. On a comic level, "the bloody loam" has become a "finished product," for Williams has created an anthropomorphic giant from the very ground he walks on. When "I," probably Williams the narrator rather than Paterson the giant, responds to "P," his answer is equally clever: "Leadership passes into empire; empire begets insolence; insolence brings ruin."

The answer parodies Pound's expansive theories of civilization in cadenced language reminiscent of some passages from The Cantos. Ironically, the narrator also depicts Pound's literary career. Pound's leadership in the poetic revolution had placed him at the head of a literary empire, but a single-minded correlation of his economic theories with Mussolini's Fascist aims in the late thirties and early forties had led to his ruin. Beginning with section three
of Book One and continuing throughout the poem, Williams examines Pound's economic theories just as he examines Eliot's religious theories. Despite a greater sympathy for Pound than for Eliot, Williams identifies Pound's misapplication of his economic theories as the major factor which perverted Pound's talent with language. Paterson survives in the stream of language because Williams can separate his literary father's valuable contributions from his crackpot schemes.

Though Williams builds a satiric substructure by providing literary identities for his giant Paterson and prominent historic figures, he also includes in Book One historic prose fragments with no apparent allegorical references. At least three prose fragments directly establish the varied backgrounds of immigrants and natives who make up the populace of Paterson. Other prose fragments relate local events associated with the Passaic River. Thus, the stories of Peter the dwarf, Patch, the Cummings and Tim Crane can also serve as elements of local color, evidence of real people in a real world, part of the foreground of Williams' demonstration that he can lift a locality to mythic proportions.

Once specific literary identities are established, however, Williams can rely on references to the early satiric substructure to clarify satiric thrusts in later books or to alert readers to other comic references which appear in Book One. One such reference is built around
Peter the dwarf and a fish story. After Peter has been described as "a monster in human form," complete with statistics about his age, head, and body measurements, a brief paragraph offers statistics on the "heterogeneous population" which existed around the falls of 1870. Then "the Furies" appear and a brief fragment tells how a large sturgeon was caught by a group of boys. Though the fish's size and some sentences and phrases in the account can be traced to historic source books, Williams appears to have added the name John Winters as the boy who "waded into the water and clambered on the back of the huge fish" (11). Williams also strategically closes the account with the title of the newspaper stories in which the account appeared: "The Monster Taken." Given the proximity of this fragment to the one depicting Eliot as "a monster in human form," Williams probably intended John Winters to represent Ivor Winters, one of the earliest and fiercest critics to attack Eliot's poetry. Williams would have been familiar with Winters' Primitivism and Decadence, for in additions to Winters' attacks on Eliot's work, the volume includes Winters' close and admiring analysis of one of Williams' poems. By including Winters in his fish story, Williams could provide more than another interesting excerpt from history. The literary reader with a taste for allegory can chuckle at the thought of Ivor Winters on Eliot's back.

Another prose fragment which depends on the establishment of Eliot as the big-headed monster is the letter from
"T" in the second section of Book One (26-27). "T," perhaps Allen Tate, is the favorite child of a mother who has a "crippled head." In one late draft, the letter includes a "St. Louis sister," another probable reference to Eliot. Williams cut that draft severely when he changed "St. Louis sister" to "my Hartford sister" and changed another sister's name from "Skip" to "Billy." Williams may have made the change after he associated Stevens with Eliot in the Preface. The final version of the letter dwells primarily on Billy's bad temper. T. reports that Billy "has always been eccentric and wanted to boss" and that Billy bossed her Hartford sister "until she became big enough to throsh her." The reference to Stevens is good-humored, can be related to Williams' warning to Stevens in the Preface, and indicates that Stevens must now be considered a major literary figure capable of competing with Williams. When T. recalls how she "helped with the work" which included washing the pots each morning, "even Billy's with dung in it," Williams even pokes fun at some of the critical reception given to his early work. The humorous references to Billy indicate Williams' readiness to turn a few satiric thrusts at himself, to confess his own shortcomings. Just as Williams had classified his poem as a dog among dogs and had billed himself as a drunken giant competing with other foolish characters, in this letter he also puts himself on the same level as those he ridicules.
Williams also may have used the letter about Billy to alert readers to a new kind of dung which can be found in Paterson. The letter precedes a poetic segment that in early manuscripts appears to directly bait the new critics who insisted on probing every line of Eliot's work for moral, ethical or spiritual significance.

I think he means to kill me, I don't know
What to do, he comes in after midnight
I pretend to be asleep he stands
I feel him looking down at me, I am afraid

Who? Who? Who?

Sermonize them: a quart of potatoes, half
a dozen oranges, a bunch of beets
and some soup greens; Look I have a new set
of teeth. Why you look ten years younger —
You played beautiful: What then?49

The first stanza is similar to Eliot's technique of using conversation and questions to achieve a sense of drama in portions of The Waste Land and may even be a humorous parody of the nervous woman in "A Game of Chess."

"My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
"Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
"What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
"I never know what you are thinking. Think."50

The next stanza, with the reference to "a new set of teeth" is undoubtedly a parody of two cockney women in a London pub who also appear in "A Game of Chess."

Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you
To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there
You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set.
He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.51
Cleanth Brooks saw these scenes as part of Eliot's unified presentation of "spiritual emptiness" in *The Waste Land*. Williams, however, evokes the echoes almost as a challenge to such critics as Brooks, Tate and Blackmur or any others who probed both Eliot's earlier and later works for spiritual significance. When Williams attaches to his echo of Eliot the mere items from a grocery list and challenges his readers to "Sermonize them" he appears to be baiting critics who would be familiar with *The Waste Land* and critical commentary about it. Williams later omitted his last line containing the grammatical error and the important challenge to "Sermonize them." He added an introductory line, expanded his questions and produced a less obvious but still nonsensical parody of Eliot's technique. In the final version, the groceries can, at best, be viewed as food to be chewed by the new teeth, but they surely have no spiritual significance.

Williams concludes this poetic segment with three stanzas taken from the elongated version of the early "Paterson" described in Chapter One. The stanzas comment on "wit" and "decorum" and include Williams' early parody of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in a squalid tenement scene. The entire poetic segment closes ironically with lines which are a basic tenet of the early as well as the late *Paterson*: "no ideas but/ in the facts" (28). Williams had already altered the facts of history and of personal letters to provide some unexpected ideas about
contemporary poets and their poems. He had played with the language and techniques of other poets and adapted them to his own purposes. The ideas found in his facts would surely not be either conventional or expected.

In many ways, Book One of *Paterson* is Williams' virtuoso performance. He defies tradition by using prose and poetry together. He creates a lyrical myth and undercut the very creation of myth at the same time. He dips into local history to turn it in one direction until it becomes myth and in another direction until it becomes satire. He introduces a heterogeneous populace with "language divorced from their minds" and uses language in enough different ways to appeal to several levels of readers. He combines fragments from many manuscripts written over a period of years into a scrapbook collage that demonstrates his ability to outmaneuver and outwrite other poets as well as outwit critics who might be tempted to probe his work for literary allusions or look for deeper layers of significance. If they do, they will find a poet who can mock other poets, set himself up as a literary giant among literary giants, yet still manage an occasional laugh at himself. Like a man who spends his days wearing many masks and feeling many moods or a city which democratically accommodates all people, Williams embraces plurality: plurality of content, plurality of sensibility, plurality of mood and plurality of form. He begins to roll up a devastating picture of the literary landscape and a mock-heroic picture of his own
local landscape which are a satire and a celebration simultaneously. But the mockery in Williams' performance was not fully understood by those early readers who perceived an epic when Williams thought he was writing a satire.

In May of 1945, after Book One had gone to the printer, Williams wrote to Laughlin about "having fun reading the history of Greek Lit.: Studies of the Greek Poets by John Aldington Symonds." Within a month, he discovered in his reading a quotation which he described to Laughlin as "the single footnote to the entire poem." This important addition comes from Symonds' chapter "The Satirists," specifically the last portion which depicts Hipponax, the Greek satirist who restored satire to its "primitive function" and "used the iambic as a weapon of personal attack..." Williams chose to use a major segment of the paragraph which relates "the deformed and mutilated verses" to "the distorted subjects with which they dealt—the vices and perversions of humanity—as well as their agreement with the snarling spirit of the satirist" (40). The quotation would appear at the conclusion of Book One and would identify Williams' experiments with form and their relationships to the satiric element in his work more clearly than any other statement or implication. But Williams had hidden his satire so carefully and mounted his attack against Eliot so brilliantly that his "single footnote to the entire poem" went undeciphered.
Williams also wrote to Laughlin in May of 1945 that Paterson Two was "well on its way." Four months later, Williams anticipated a lashing from the critics and expected to retaliate in his follow-up book. He confided to Laughlin, "I wish that Paterson thing were out so that I could take my beating, get mad and write Book Two in a fit of temper. Book Two, I might add, is already written. I'll slash it to hell in that fit of temper if it comes." Thus, by the time critics were attempting to evaluate and elucidate Book One, Williams already had a large portion of Book Two completed. Some passages of Book Two which Williams had already written had been planned originally for inclusion in Book One and contained the same type of satiric undercutting as Book One. Others would follow up satiric thrusts barely begun in Book One. Had the critics been harsh, the satiric impulse so carefully concealed in Book One could have been omitted or moved to the foreground of Book Two.

Instead Williams would be surprised by the first burst of serious critical acclaim which put him in the same league with Pound, Eliot and Crane, some of the very poets he was surreptitiously attacking. He would need to reevaluate his comic context and meet the expectations of fellow poets and critics who called Paterson the most important work Williams had done and who held great expectations for the three books which were to follow. Williams couldn't entirely change course; Book One was already in print and
much of Book Two had already been written. Parts of both books would depend on later books for a full appreciation of their satire. Williams couldn't curtail his comedy; he could and did, however, keep his satire private and subtle while continuing to build on the serious expectations of his critics.
CHAPTER IV

1. Williams, Selected Letters, p. 236.

2. Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Feb. 4, 1945.

3. This argument now appears as the first paragraph of an Author's Note which introduces the five books of Paterson and fragments for a sixth book.

4. Williams, I Wanted to Write a Poem, p. 83.


6. Passages introducing the falls and Mr. Paterson are taken from the early published poem and interspersed with new material in the first four pages of Book One. They contribute to a tone of high seriousness which pervades the first section even though this section is also filled with double entendre. The passage on wit and decorum and the last three lines of the published early poem appear with the early parody of "Prufrock" (see Chapter One) near the close of the second section of Book One. The final passages come from the extended manuscript and appear near the close of the third section (pp. 36-39) of Book One. They differ in tone from the early manuscript and are linked to it primarily by stanza and line techniques.

7. Mariani summarizes the critical response to Paterson I, pp. 77-83.

8. Yale manuscript: Notes and Early Drafts for Book II.

9. On February 26, 1944, Williams wrote to Laughlin, "Paterson, the Introduction, which is all that the present work comprises, is moving along toward a first draft. It'll be a book (a poem) in itself . . ." SUNY manuscript Ell contains a twenty-page version of the material which was later condensed to two and a half pages.

SUNY manuscript Ell This manuscript was written sometime in 1944. On Nov. 15, 1944, Williams wrote to Byron Vazakas, "The God damned stupid philosophic poets think they can read it [the world] through philosophy. O.K. by me. Not one of them has the sheer poetic flair, the language as I state it, for the task. Not Tate, nor Blackmur, not surely Auden and I am sure not Eliot good though he may be."


Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction was published in the fall of 1942 by the Cumington Press, the same press which published Williams' book of poetry, The Wedge, in Sept. of 1944. Four Quartets was published in book form in the U. S. in 1943 although "East Coker" and "The Dry Salvages" had both appeared earlier in Partisan Review, a magazine Williams read and contributed to. "East Coker" appeared in 1940 and "The Dry Salvages" in 1941.

In 1937, Marianne Moore noticed "an awareness of if not the influence of T. S. Eliot" in Stevens' poetry, particularly in the volumes she was reviewing, Owl's Clover and Ideas of Order. The review appeared in Poetry, 1937. Horace Gregory suggested that the values in Stevens' poems "cannot be measured in philosophical terms" in his review of Parts of a World, Accent, autumn, 1942. Mrs. Mary Colum, reviewing the same book for the New York Times Book Review, came to the opposite conclusion: "The mind that the author [Stevens] projects into such careful and measured language is the philosophic speculative mind where the passions are of the intellectual rather than the sensuous order." Hi Simons quotes both Gregory and Colum in The Sewanee Review, 5 (Oct.-Nov., 1945). Williams would surely have been aware of this controversy.


Eliot mentions the "Patterns . . . of dead and living" on p. 129, but the theme of spiritual grace runs through all the Quartets. In "Little Gidding" the English Civil War represents all wars.

Stevens, p. 234.

20 SUNY manuscripts E13 and E15 indicate how a prose fragment probably intended to suggest Eliot's interest in church real estate was changed to suggest a playful comparison of Williams and Stevens.


23 Weaver traces Williams' pursuit of historic documents in a section of Chapter Seven entitled "The Documentary Way," pp. 115-121. In a note, p. 202, he indicates Williams' sources for the prose fragment on Peter the dwarf: a lost manuscript borrowed by Williams from Herbert A. Fisher, "The Legends of the Passaic," which in turn draws from J. W. Barber and Henry Howe, Historical Collections of New Jersey (Newark, NJ, 1855), p. 407; and L. R. Trumbull, History of Industrial Paterson (Paterson: Carleton M. Herrick, 1882), p. 20. The two latter books are available in the Paterson Public Library. Both sources quote the account Williams used though they differ in their introductions, the context in which the quotation appears and details of capitalization and punctuation.


25 SUNY manuscript E-4.

He died on the cross for you: Was this the sagest thing was ever said? Implemented as it was by a wild careful plunge: Into the deepest pool below the streaming cataract of the light?

Back into the loam: They don’t know what to say next. They have no words - only the words of the minister to guide them - which they do not believe. If they did, it might be different: "I like to go to church" I'll bet you don't wear your slacks there. Of course I don't
- as the wood thrush sings announcing
  his petty miracle
A wonder! A wonder in the woods.

In the name of the Father and of His
Blessed son
Who died for you upon the cross of wood,

Are these the truest words were ever said?

This early passage is expanded in SUNY manuscript E-24, a
late draft of Book Two.

26 Yale manuscript: Paterson III. Early Notes and
Drafts.

27 SUNY manuscript C148.

28 Williams, Selected Essays, p. 266.

29 Williams, Selected Essays, p. 264.

30 E. E. Cummings, Contact #2, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Feb.
1932), p. 11. Three issues of Contact appeared in 1932
before the magazine was discontinued for a second time.
Weaver, p. 202, notes Williams' source as Barber and Howe,
Historical Collections, p. 412. He neglects to note, how­
ever, that the name in this source is the Rev. Hooper
Cumming. It is worth noting that, in some manuscripts,
Williams calls the characters Sarah and Hopper Cummins
before he decides to make the slighter change to Sarah and
Hopper Cumming.

31 Williams, Selected Essays, pp. 265-266.

32 SUNY manuscript E8.

33 SUNY manuscript E18.

34 SUNY manuscripts E20, E21, E22, E24 and E25.

35 Joseph E. Slate identifies Tim Crane as Hart Crane in
"William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane and 'The Virtue of
History'," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 6
(Winter, 1965), pp. 486-511. Slate erroneously reads Sam
Patch as a mask for Paterson.

36 Charles Pitman Longwell, A Little Story of Old
Paterson: as told by an old man (Paterson, 1901), Ch. 5,
pp. 37-42. This obscure volume is available at the
Paterson Public Library.

38 SUNY manuscript C27.

39 Longwell, Ch. 4, p. 33.

40 Longwell, Ch. 7, p. 52.


42 Weaver, pp. 122-127, gives a full account of Williams' relationship to Lyle though he does not suggest irony or satire in relation to Lyle's material.

43 Letter from Williams to Laughlin, July 13, 1942.

44 Weaver, p. 124.

45 Benjamin Sankey, A Companion to William Carlos Williams's Paterson (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1971), p. 66. Sankey identifies the quotation from Pound but suggests that "P" and "I" are "two voices (minds) to Paterson."

46 Weaver, p. 202, identifies the first and last sentences of the excerpt as coming respectively from Nelson and Shriner, History of Paterson, Vol. 1, p. 142; and C. P. Longwell, Historic Totowa Falls (Paterson, 1942), pp. 57-58. The information upon which Williams bases his excerpt appears in Longwell's volume, but no names are given in either source to the boys who capture the fish.


48 SUNY manuscripts E13 and E15.

49 Yale manuscript: Notes and Drafts I through IV.


54 Letter from Williams to Laughlin, May 15, 1945.

55 Letter from Williams to Laughlin, June 14, 1945.


57 Letter from Williams to Laughlin, May 15, 1945.

58 Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Sept. 26, 1945.
CHAPTER V

SUNDAY AND THE DOGS

Two years elapsed between the completion of Books One and Two, years that produced long overdue honors for a poet in his sixties. During this time, Williams began his ascent toward national and international recognition, and though pessimistic fears about Book One were banished, new expectations from the critics created new insecurities.

"Sunday in the Park," the book that was "well on its way" in the spring of 1945 went through several drafts and hundreds of typed pages before Williams finally surrendered a manuscript to the printer in June of 1947. During these years, Williams struggled to correlate his own conceptions of Paterson with expectations from his reading public.

Book One did not receive the critical lambasting Williams had feared when he told Laughlin in late 1945 that he wished he "had the guts to say to burn the whole Paterson script." Instead, the book went almost unnoticed for a few months and then catapulted into the limelight during the last six months of 1946. Although a few early critics approached the book as an unsuccessful departure from traditional long poems, two prominent literary figures recognized it as a major addition to Williams' work. In August, Isaac Rosenfeld noted the autobiographical element
and identified a mood of poetic "summary and wisdom" in his brief but laudatory review in The Nation. He also expected that the three coming books might include more than Williams' poetic wisdom and suggested Williams' knowledge of "childbirth, women, life along the Passaic." Several weeks later, Randall Jarrell, while reviewing a collection of seven books of poetry for Partisan Review, devoted five of his thirteen pages to Paterson, calling it "the best thing William Carlos Williams has ever written." He admired the poem's musical organization, interrelationship of several themes and timely subject: "How can you tell the truth about things—that is how can you find a language so close to the world that the world can be represented and understood by it." After citing several passages to indicate a rough summary of the poem's argument, Jarrell concluded, "There has never been a poem more American; if the next three books are as good as this one, which introduces 'the elemental character of the place,' the whole poem will be far and away the best long poem any American has written." Thus, two important critics writing in major national magazines, noticed those parts of Book One which were related to Williams' total career, to his dream of an American language and landscape and to his development of a form to encompass these and other aspects of his work. Both Rosenfeld and Jarrell missed the mock heroic elements of Williams' mythic giants and the satiric portraits of Williams' compatriots along with other comic
beginnings Williams had included in his Preface and in Book One.

Williams' reactions to early criticism can be found in a letter to Kitty Hoagland and letters to Laughlin. When one reviewer from a Newark paper panned the poem for its incoherence, Williams wrote to Kitty that he was "tickled" by the review.  "Let 'em flounder, that's part of my intention," he added. His reaction to Rosenfeld and Jarrell was quite different, however, and he wrote to Laughlin with a sense of surprise and gratitude over the praise he had received. Williams called Rosenfeld's review "a crackerjack appreciation of the poem" and "a very friendly gesture from someone with a very discerning mind." In this early burst of enthusiasm, Williams also implied that the brief one and a half page review could actually influence future books:

More important to me than anything else is the help Rosenfeld is to me in this review in the work I've got ahead of me in finishing up the other three parts of the poem. This will be a tremendous help to me—a graph, you might say, of my own mind picked up by a neutral and laid out for me in my own terms. That, to my mind is reviewing! I am deeply indebted to R. for this help.

Though Williams' particular poetic wisdom was not exactly what Rosenfeld had called for, Williams already had planned to extend his language theme in several directions. He intended to undercut the religious and economic emphases of Eliot's and Pound's work even as he adapted to his own material poetic devices and themes Eliot and Pound had used. Book Two would also feature women, though in an
ironic context, for Williams planned to use excerpts from Marcia Nardi's letters as both effectively written prose and an ironic challenge to the man-poet Paterson. Williams also intended to play with the relationship between his man-city-giant and the female-park which lay beside him, adding more obvious humor to the earlier myth and providing a setting for realistic local scenes. Thus, Williams could hope to meet some of Rosenfeld's expectations on a literal level even as he proceeded on an allegorical level.

Four months after Rosenfeld's review, when Williams had received greater acclaim than ever before in his career, he was still surprised but more offhand about the popularity of Book One. In December, he wrote to Laughlin about further critical response: "Randall Jarrell sure gave me a boost, didn't he. He's turned out to be a firm friend. Auden also came to the party. What do you know. And Oscar Williams! Geeze, I must be getting somewhere." Though Williams' pessimistic fears about Book One had disappeared, his higher literary stature provoked a new round of self-consciousness. With each new review came greater expectations for future work and a more established public image for Williams.

In addition to favorable reviews of Book One, another honor was accorded Williams in 1946 when the fall issue of Briarcliff Quarterly was devoted to him. New selections
of Williams' prose and poetry suggested the variety of his
talents but received less attention than testimonies by
friends and admirers who praised Williams' typical
American subjects and democratic values. In one article,
his friend Parker Tyler provided an overview of Williams'
poetic career ranging from early imagist poems through the
first book of Paterson. Tyler showed how Williams had
used his lyric talents to depict his own environment, to
capture the actual places and events rather than their
emotional content. Instead of seeking "rhetorical formu-
las" like Crane or an "objective correlative" like Eliot,
Williams had preferred throughout his career to offer
lyrically the actual data of the event or place. In
Paterson, Tyler saw Williams combining a collection of
data about his city and himself that it might be raised to
mythic proportions in a similar way to Joyce's development
of myth in Finnegan's Wake. Although Tyler admitted the
myth would need extensive development in future books, his
analysis helped establish the epic proportions readers
began to expect from Paterson. The numerous specific
details and carefully portrayed local scenes of Book Two
suggest that Williams expected to fulfill Tyler's expecta-
tions. Possibly also in response to Tyler, Williams com-
posed "a riddle, in the Greek-Joycian sense" which he at
one time considered using to conclude the third part of
Book Two but which was eventually relegated to Book
Three. Williams was obviously eager to satisfy his
critics as well as continue the half-joking half-serious approach to his poem.

In the mid-forties, Williams' critics and readers had little reason to suspect his recently renewed interest in comedy and satire. Publication of his translation of Quevedo's satire, *The Dog and the Fever*, had been indefinitely postponed; thus the most obvious expression of his fascination with and knowledge of satire had been suppressed. His interest in and careful reading of Chaucer was mentioned mainly in letters to friends or in speeches delivered to small college audiences. Though Jarrell had noticed some of the ironic contexts in which Williams wove his language theme, no reviewer of *Paterson* had pointed out the understated parody, the humorous dog image in the Preface, or the allegorical references in some prose segments. Neither did critics take special notice of Williams' "single footnote to the entire poem," the quotation from Symonds' chapter on the Greek satirists. Although Williams may have considered himself a new kind of satirist and his poem the first installment of a comedy in the Chaucerian tradition, his critics had seen only hints of an American epic by a poet who had already proved his interest in serious American themes. While they left large segments of the first book unexplained, they also projected a second book quite different from the one Williams' already-completed drafts suggest that he had planned.
Like Book One, some segments of Book Two dated back to the early forties. In even the earliest fragments, Williams had planned to use a minister and a group of immigrant picnickers in a segment entitled "wops on the rocks." In one very early manuscript, the minister is black and appears to be part of Williams' depiction of the heterogeneous population that makes up Paterson, and by extension, America. From the time he chose his title "Sunday in the Park" and outlined his four books, however, Williams began to introduce subtle hints which would associate the minister with Eliot. Instead of being only part of the heterogeneous population, the minister became a comic character with an empty and unheard message. The minister began to function as a contrast to the happy picnickers who continued to represent an ethnic contribution to the American population but who also became a laugh at Pound's Italian cultural traditions in The Cantos.

Two early drafts of Book Two were completed before Book One was organized and before Williams wrote his Preface. These drafts include the minister as a poet and also suggest an early way in which Williams approached his personification of the landscape:

An old man in shirt sleeves is jumping up and down on the already trampled ground (while the green bush sways) beating the air to the time of his poem while the mountain, disassociated, listens (and if this is a "pathetic fallacy" than it would be still a greater one that nothing listens)
A personified landscape would later become part of the mock heroic depiction of Williams' giants in both Books One and Two and would serve to ridicule Eliot's more serious incorporation of myth into his poetry. Identification of the minister as a poet was one of Williams' early ways of associating Klaus Ehrens with Eliot. Though Ehrens' sermon would no longer be called a poem when Book Two was finally published, Ehrens would be identified as a poet. The content and context of his sermon would call attention to the religious dimension of Eliot's career and would become part of the accreted satiric portrait of Eliot.

Williams also had planned in this early draft a deprecatory economic theme built around Alexander Hamilton. The Hamilton material originally may have been designed to support Pound's view of Hamilton in *The Cantos*, but gradually it became a burlesque of Pound's economic fervor and a refutation of some of his beliefs. Juxtaposed to the minister's sermon, the Hamilton material becomes one more poetic voice that the Sunday visitors ignore. By the early forties, Williams had decided to conclude his emphasis on the varied voices in the park with the assertion that "no poet has come." Even in the draft which preceded Book One, Pound and Eliot were undoubtedly the poets who had tried but failed.

Williams did much of the correlating and consolidating of Book Two in the early months of 1947 after favorable reviews of Book One had come out. Describing his
progress in a March letter to his old friend McAlmon, Williams not only suggested the thread of unity in the projection of his total poem but also revealed his self-consciousness and vacillating moods about the new book:

Of late I've been plugging hard, every available moment, on *Paterson*, Book II. The whole of the four books has been roughly sketched out for several years. I've finished Book I. So now Book II is up. During January and February I worked on assembling the notes I had on this book and connecting them up in some sort of order. . . Yesterday I finally got the 90 odd pages of the "full" version—as I call it—down on paper. It's pretty loose stuff, but the thread, I think, is there. It's there, in other words—such as it is.

Now comes the job of cutting and clarifying. I dread the job of retyping the stuff and no one can help me. If I feel a bit optimistic things go well. You know the feeling. But if I hit a low spot and the whole business seems a redundant heap of garbage, the work stops short.¹¹

The unifying thread Williams mentioned was almost certainly a thread of satire with a plan for introducing and ridiculing as many outdated poetic devices as possible. The parts of all four books which he had composed are those which trace Paterson's story as a poet who seeks the voice of his own land, who cannot find it in other poets or in the library but who feels it in the landscape and life of the people about him. Only when Paterson rejects worn out poetic traditions borrowed from Europe and turns toward his own country can he hope to complete his quest. In manuscripts predating Book Two, Williams had experimented with mock-heroic myth, a mock drama which would be relegated to Book Four, burlesques of Eliot's religious emphasis and Pound's historic emphasis, an
outright polemic against academic critics and an ironic 
lyrical monologue that closely resembles prayer. He had 
also developed the dog image that runs throughout 
Paterson. By the time he needed to cut and clarify for 
Book Two, he was well aware of the divergence between the 
kind of poem he had originally intended and the poem his 
reading public had come to expect.

In the three months that followed the letter to 
McAlmon, Williams worked hard to integrate his readers' 
expectations with the allegory he already had begun. The 
task was difficult and in May, he confessed "distresses of 
mind" to Lockwood Library curator Charles Abbott, who had 
become a close friend. In his letter, Williams explains 
how final work on Book Two has nearly finished him and 
confides one of his fears: "Perhaps I never was what they 
thought me and having deceived them once what is to become 
of me now?" Despite such worries, however, Williams 
produced a book that depicted his immediate world even as 
it rolled up the portrait of a larger-than-life hero who 
could do all that other poets did, but who preferred to 
understand his own language and land.

In Book Two, Faitoute, the hero who does all, 
observes local scenes as he walks caressingly up and down 
the mountain. By treating his myth as actuality, Williams 
can play with the idea of his giant-city wooing the Park 
who is "female to the city" and "upon whose body Paterson 
instructs his thoughts/ (concretely)." The wooing and the
caressing of her body by the feet of Sunday visitors are lighthearted touches, but they also contribute to the struggle toward fertility which dominates the opening section. Williams' adaptation of the fertility theme is almost certainly a counter to the theme of sterility which pervades The Waste Land.

Part of the struggle toward fertility occurs when Faitoute comes upon a pair of working class lovers in the course of his stroll up the mountain. The couple appear to be Williams' version of Eliot's working class lovers in The Waste Land. In "The Fire Sermon," Eliot had depicted various scenes of sordid modern love including a seduction of "the typist home at teatime" by "the young man carbuncular" who is "a small house agent's clerk." Like the rape of Philomel, the seduction is forced, but with a modern twist, the typist boringly accepts the young man's assault. Williams' lovers are neither sophisticated nor confined to a city flat, but instead lie "beneath/ the sun in frank vulgarity," where they talk, eat and make love. Although Williams' scene lacks enthusiasm, the couple are "flagrant beyond all talk" and "not undignified" (52). Their lovemaking becomes "pitiful thoughts" that "meet/ in the flesh" and their situation is associated with "minds beaten thin/ by waste" (51). Williams' description is compassionate in contrast to Eliot's condescending attitude toward his working class lovers. Another contrast occurs when Williams adopts Eliot's technique of
juxtaposing the love scene to other contemporary scenes and to scenes from the past. In *The Waste Land*, instances of failed or sordid love are juxtaposed to scenes of failed and forced love from the past: Ophelia mad from her love of Hamlet, the rape of Philomel, Cleopatra and Dido who chose death rather than life without love. Williams also juxtaposes his love scene to other scenes, but the scenes are calculated to diagnose the problem rather than to reinforce the sense of failed love.

Williams introduces the lovers immediately after he has stressed the need for a new kind of poetic line. He also provides an immediate contrast between the lovers who "seem to talk" and three colored girls with "voices vagrant" and "laughter wild, flagellant, dissociated/ from the fixed scene" (51). Unlike the colored girls, the lovers lack a language to express their sensual feelings. Later in the first section, when Williams returns to the lovers, he juxtaposes the scene to an episode depicting Italian immigrants who have not totally lost the ability to express themselves. The immigrants contrast sharply with the working class woman who, roused with desire, finds her lover "flagrantly bored and sleeping, a/ beer bottle still grasped spear-like/ in his hand" (59). After this point, the drunken lovers merge into the sleeping Paterson and his mountain woman, for both couples lack the language which will enable them to realize their desires and their dreams.
Treating his lovers with compassion rather than contempt was not enough for Williams. He also needed to diagnose their problem and he did this in passages associated with Pound's work, passages which precede each scene with the lovers. The first passage appears to have grown from the false starts of several essays about Pound which Williams attempted to write in early 1947. Both the passage and the essays indicate that Williams was still struggling to discover exactly what he did and did not owe to Pound. In the essays, Williams establishes Pound's well-deserved reputation as an innovator with the poetic line, then asserts that Pound's economic ideas work "to the detriment of his poetry." As he continues, Williams muses over the possibility that his evaluation may be related to his own jealousy over Pound's talents: "I don't know why I should be obsessed with the thought of Pound. I suspect a defense mechanism working in myself, that he is a better poet than I am." Later in the essay, Williams offers another reason for his judgment of Pound's recent poetry: "I find that I am judging poetry, rather I find that I am estimating present movements in poetry . . . on a structural basis, the possibility of invention in the art—a greater resourcefulness in the making of the line." Williams asserts these same ideas poetically in a passage purposely structured after Pound's famous "Usura" canto.
In Canto 45, Pound uses repetition of the phrase "With usura" to introduce various areas of Italian life which are impoverished by the shortage of money created by banks and banking institutions. He offers examples of lasting art such as frescoes in cathedrals and in palaces which cannot be sold to increase the amount of money available to the public or to new artists. Such works of art were produced when the artist was supported by wealthy patrons, when the governing society saw a need for great art, when banking institutions had not yet created a shortage of money. In the thirties, Pound had directed his fifth decad of Cantos toward this economic theme and had allowed his interest in money systems to dominate both his political and literary life. Williams echoes Pound's "With usura" refrain to show a different emphasis in his own work and also to show the real contribution Pound has made to modern poetry in contrast to the failed economic emphasis.

Without invention nothing is well spaced, unless the mind change, unless the stars are new measured, according to their relative positions, the line will not change, the necessity will not matriculate; unless there is a new mind there cannot be a new line, the old will go on repeating itself with recurring deadliness: without invention nothing lies under the witch-hazel bush, the alder does not grow from among the hummocks margining the all but spent channel of the old swale, the small foot-prints of the mice under the overhanging tufts of the bunch-grass will not
appear: without invention the line
will never take on its ancient
divisions when the word, a supple word,
lived in it, crumbled now to chalk. (50)

Williams makes several points in this passage which
were central to his thinking about his own interest in
prosody and Pound's poetry. First, and most important, is
his switch in emphasis from usury as an international
problem to traditional poetic language as a problem which
must be overcome if new poetic life is to appear. Next,
the poet's mind must change in keeping with the modern
world as surely as the mathematician's mind has devised
new ways to measure "relative" distances. If it does not,
poets will continue to write the stale poems Williams had
warned Stevens against in the Preface. Finally, without a
new approach to prosody, the language can never again be
as effective as it was in ancient times. Williams' essays
on Pound suggest that he was thinking of "the caesura to
take the place of Greek quantity" and was also aware of
Pound's innovative use of the caesura in modern verse.
His placement of the passage, however, suggests that the
failure of language in the modern world leads to an
inability to live fully and to express such primitive but
pervasive urges as sexual desire.

The passage which precedes the second scene with the
lovers is also related to Pound, but the passage becomes
humorous as Williams converts Pound's wealthy and cultured
Italians to a group of immigrants who bring their spirit
and vitality to America rather than the trumped-up financial system Pound had tried so hard to promote. From the earliest drafts and notes, this scene had been entitled "Wops on the Rocks."

In all manuscripts, the picnic scene with the immigrant family is a scene of gaiety. In early manuscripts the gaiety is associated with Silenus and the Dionysian cult. Williams later shifts from the Greek divinities to Priapus, the Italian god of animal and vegetable fertility. He also creates a contrast between those family members who do not openly express their joy and Mary, who urges them to do so. As "Grandma," Mary retains a kind of primitive vitality which the others suppress in themselves. Mary dances while scolding her family in a combination of broken English, slang and an Italian curse.

Come on! Wassa ma'? You got broken leg?

It is this air! the air of the Midi
and the old cultures intoxicates them:
present!

—lifts one arm holding the cymbals
of her thoughts, cocks her old head
and dances! raising her skirts:

La la la la!

What a bunch of bums! Afraid somebody see you?

Blah!

Excrementi! --she spits.

Look a' me, Grandma! Everybody too damn
lazy (57).
The passage is somewhat reminiscent of Eliot's cockney passages in _The Waste Land_, but Mary is neither crudely immoral like Lil with her abortion nor crassly insensitive like Lil's friend. Mary's Italian cursing and American slang suggest an enthusiasm for life which all of Eliot's characters lack. By using Eliot's technique with Italian immigrants who parody Pound's cultured Italians, Williams can poke fun at the high seriousness in _The Waste Land_ and _The Cantos_ even as he reminds his readers how much vitality can be brought to the language when it is used without restraint.

The passage also contains word play contributing to his larger diatribe against _The Waste Land_ and _The Cantos_. In early manuscripts, Mary held in her hand "cymbals/ of her blood." Though Williams abandoned the Communion parody, he retained the pun on symbols, not only to indicate that Mary's dance was symbolic of a fertility dance but also to ridicule Eliot's use of traditional symbolism and fertility myths in _The Waste Land_. The fertility dance is linked with Mary's drunkenness which comes from "the air of the Midi," a passing reference to Pound's early interest in Provencal poetry. Mary's joyful intoxication receives greater emphasis when she is compared to "the peon in the lost/ Eisenstein film drinking/ from a wineskin with the abandon/ of a horse drinking." The peon is a "Heavenly man," who, like Mary, is akin to the old cultures which used strong drink in fertility celebrations.
--the leg raised, verisimilitude

even to the coarse contours of the leg, the
bovine touch! The leer, the cave of it,
the female of it facing the male, the satyr--
(Priapus!)

with that lonely implication, goatherd
and goat, fertility, the attack, drunk,
cleansed . (58)

Unlike Eliot, Williams sees a ritualistic cleansing associated with such fertility celebrations. Williams believed the celebration of natural impulses toward creativity had been suppressed in the modern world. Such suppression is akin to the suppression of the Eisenstein film and even to the suppression of new and experimental literature.

The emphasis on fertility associated with natural and colloquial language which Williams builds by way of the Italian immigrants' scene is paralleled by a contrast between leashed and unleashed dogs which also appears in the opening section of Book Two.

Williams had prepared for the dog scenes in his Preface by humorously depicting his poem as a dog among dogs. This doggy poem would "scratch front and back/
Deceive and eat. Dig/ a musty bone" (3). Most of the musty bones dug up in Book One are poetic techniques used by Eliot in either his religious poems and poetic drama or The Waste Land. Williams even may have intended the dog in his preface in part as a parody of the dog which appears in The Waste Land at the close of "The Burial of the Dead:"

"That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
"Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
"Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
"Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!" 20

Cleanth Brooks had identified Eliot's dog as "Humanitarianism and the related philosophies which, in their concern for men, extirpate the supernatural—dig up the corpse of the buried god and thus prevent the rebirth of life." 21 Williams' dog is a poem which digs up stale elements of other poems and devours them satirically to make way for new poetic life.

Musty is a key word in Williams' Preface. In Book Two, Williams includes a letter which gives an account of Musty, an actual dog who is about to have puppies, to produce new life in contrast to her stale name (54). Musty is a bitch who has gone unleashed while her master is away, who has, despite the frantic efforts of her caretaker, found a mate and become pregnant. The letter about Musty is addressed to "Dear B," which may originally have been Dear Bill to indicate that Musty belongs to Bill Williams but which can also serve as Dear Bone in order to relate Musty to the Preface. Thus, Musty's name is ironic; Williams' poem will produce new life through actual language experiments while exposing the stale bones of other poetry through double entendre.

A much longer version of the letter about Musty appears in one early draft which was prepared before Williams wrote his Preface and completed Book Two; therefore, the process Williams followed to build his allegory
can be traced. He deleted everything from the letter except the references to Musty's story and the apologies for letting her loose. He also created a prose passage about a leashed dog which would contrast with Musty's story. The prose passage has an interesting history.

From the beginning, the passage describes what might have been an actual scene Williams had observed. A "neatly dressed man of affairs" combs out the coat of his white collie dog who is leashed to a stone bench at what is described as a miniature concrete temple of Venus near the top of the mountain. The combing is systematic and even in this early version was probably associated in Williams' mind with the combing out of the language, an image he had used in Book One and would return to at the close of Book Three. The passage was first associated with Pound, for the neatly dressed man of affairs sounds like the title Williams had considered for the essay he had begun several times in January. "I think it significant that he [Pound] is abandoning his recourse to poetry for his moral (shall I say), or personal, social satisfactions. I thought this morning of writing an essay on The Poet as Man of Affairs—using Pound as my example." The essay on Pound was never completed, and Williams eliminated the "man of affairs" in favor of an image that could apply to Eliot more than to Pound.

In the second appearance of the collie passage, the emphasis shifts to the dog's obedience under the touch of
her owner, a man dressed in tweeds with "his pipe hooked in
his jaw." The passage begins and closes with reference
to the rhythmic stroking which becomes "long comb strokes
parting/ like ripples in sand the cleanwashed hair." The
grooming also now takes place in a "sea-washed space" and
the "crude temple of Venus" refers to both the place and
the dog. The beach imagery, combing imagery and reference
to the poem as a temple of love can now be loosely associ­
ated with Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," a poem
written in formal rhythms about an impotent gentleman who
longs for love. Prufrock's final appearance in the poem
is on the beach where he contemplates his own grooming,
("Shall I part my hair behind?"), and where he claims to
have seen mermaids "Combing the white hair of the waves
blown back/ When the wind blows the water white and black."
The association of images is tenuous, but Williams inter­
rupts the passage with an interjection which suggests sat­
ire: "Ride it while it has legs." As early as 1942,
Williams had written to Laughlin that Eliot was "one guy
who ought to be saddled and ridden by somebody who could
put him to good use." 27

The passage which finally appeared in Book Two no
longer contained either the interruption which suggests
satire or the reference to the temple of Venus, but it does
retain echoes of "Prufrock" and suggests an allegorical
interpretation in keeping with Williams' other dog
imagery. 28
To a stone bench, to which she's leashed, within the wall a man in tweeds—a pipe hooked in his jaw—is combing out a new-washed Collie bitch. The deliberate combstrokes part the long hair—even her face he combs though her legs tremble slightly—until it lies, as he designs, like ripples in white sand giving off its clean-dog odor. The floor, stone slabs, she stands patiently before his caresses in that bare "sea chamber."

The tweeds and pipe suggest a sophisticated Harvard-educated man such as Eliot while the "deliberate comb strokes" recall Williams' earlier image of the language "combed into straight lines" (7). The image also echoes the combing images at the conclusion of "Prufrock" just as the words "sea chamber" recall those "chambers of the sea" where Prufrock preferred to dream of mermaids rather than admit the loneliness of the real world. By treating the combing as "caresses," Williams implies the same element of love he had implied earlier through reference to the temple of Venus. The "caresses" also serve ironically, for they suggest the loving care which poets who write in traditional rhythms put into the technical perfection of their work while the reference to "Prufrock" simultaneously suggests an impotence in such work. Williams' placement of the collie scene further stresses the contrast between being leashed and running free.

The collie-combing passage is part of a larger contrast between leashed dogs and Musty, the dog who becomes pregnant. The entire episode occurs as Faitoute continues the physical process of walking up the mountain:
Walking —

he rejoins the path and sees, on a treeless knoll—the red patch choking it—
a stone wall, a sort of circular redoubt against the sky, barren and unoccupied. Mount. Why not?

The area concealing the collie and her master appears to be "barren" as well as unoccupied. Although "Mount" literally refers to Faitoute climbing the mountain, it also suggests that Faitoute is mounting a barren area to make it fertile, the first connotation of the fertility theme that will develop with Musty's story. The allusion is subtle but no less subtle than the poetic fragment Williams uses to connect the collie prose to the letter about Musty. While ostensibly describing the landscape, he also humorously implies a sexually aroused city whose "observation tower/ in the middle distance stands up prominently/ from its pubic grove" (53). Williams obviously was having fun with the contrast between his own fertile poem and the impotent poems leashed to their poets by traditional metrics or content.

Sexual desire, fertility, and the contrast between control and freedom are appropriate uses for the dog image in Book Two, for they reinforce Williams' assertion that language use must again become free of restraints and fertile if new literature is to create a new sense of American life. Williams' working class lovers lack a language rich and vital enough to express their sexual desires. Such a
language must be freed from fixed metrics, from traditional symbols and from trite themes.

The first section of Book Two closes with Faitoute's recognition that suppression constitutes part of Paterson's problem. On a literal level, the people in the park have been "paced by their dogs" (43) and the dogs have been obediently leashed by their masters. Lovers have come to the park seeking pleasure but without a language to express their desires. Other picnickers have also sought pleasure but only a few like Mary have been fully roused. Their natural instincts have been diluted through lack of language or suppressed. As the afternoon wanes, they must even be directed by a cop "toward/ the conveniences" before their journeys home. On an allegorical level, poems and poets have been tied to old traditions rather than allowed to run free. A language is clearly needed to fully arouse Americans to the potential beauty and pleasure in their lives. Though the outside world was once filled with natural beauty, much of that beauty is gone. The world has become "deformity—/ to be deciphered" (61). Ironically, the deformity is partially caused by the very restraints Americans have placed upon themselves—a morality rooted in Puritanism and an American literature still borrowing tradition and culture from Europe. Only by breaking free from such restraints as Musty broke away from her caretaker can American writers hope to produce new life in their work.

The section closes with Faitoute's ironic recognition of
"a corrosion, a parasitic curd, a clarion/ for belief, to be good dogs" (61). Just as Pound so often used caps in The Cantos to emphasize important words or ironic situations, Williams concludes the section with a park sign which summarizes America's acceptance of restraints:

NO DOGS ALLOWED AT LARGE IN THIS PARK

Although Williams devotes his first section to playful parodies of and taunts about literary techniques used by the early Eliot and Pound, the second section contains a far more serious attack on ideologies which have dominated the more recent work of both poets. Though the evangelist, Klaus Ehrens, had been related to Eliot in early manuscripts, he also becomes associated with Pound in the second section through the careful juxtaposition of economically-oriented prose with the minister's religiously oriented sermon. Money themes dominate both the sermon and the economic prose.

From the very beginning, Williams undercuts the effectiveness of Ehrens' sermon. As Faitoute walks up the mountain, he comes upon a "cramped arena" located "at the base/ of the observation tower near the urinals." Ehrens' only congregation consists of three men and a woman who provide a musical quartet plus a few women with children "propped by the others/ against their running off." When this scene is called "the Lord's line," the reference is both to the children propped on benches and the line of propaganda Ehrens feeds his "paltry congregation" (64). Ehrens'
sermon is a windy testimony of his emigration to America, his accumulation of wealth, his discovery that money can't buy happiness and his commitment to the Lord which enables him to exchange material wealth for spiritual wealth. Though "the disciples standing behind the benches" shout "Amen" at appropriate points, to Faitoute "the falls of his harangue hung featureless upon the ear . . ." (70).

Williams associates Klaus Ehrens with Eliot through a number of allusions. First, Klaus has emigrated from Europe, "the old Country," to America and has found religion in his newly adopted country. Besides contributing to Williams' theme of a heterogeneous population, Klaus's journey is a reversal of Eliot's odyssey from America to Europe where he found his religion and proclaimed it. Second, the theme of Klaus's sermon is a simplistic version of the money theme Eliot had developed more fully in The Rock. One early note suggests that Williams intended to associate the minister to Eliot's pageant even more closely at one time, for it appears to be a direct reference to Eliot's fund-raising pageant: "When is a church not a church? When it's a real estate office! he said to himself." Finally, although the minister is first called a "Protestant, protesting," he later becomes "le pauvre petit ministre," a suggestion of Eliot's early poems written in French and of the French influence in his early work. The poor little minister is fully identified as a poet in the final section of Book Two.
As the minister's sermon progresses, Williams inserts economic material to parallel Ehrens' story. Just as Ehrens had amassed wealth in the new world, America itself had grown wealthy. Men like Alexander Hamilton had promoted local industry and a system of federal taxation to tap the income from such industry. Juxtaposed to the minister's sermon, the economic prose inserts take on an evangelical tone, a tone that is heightened when Williams also inserts insistent prose fragments promoting Pound's social credit theories. The evangelical nature of Pound's economic propaganda thus becomes linked to Eliot's religious enthusiasm.

Even in manuscripts written before 1945, Williams had planned to juxtapose the minister's sermon to prose accounts of Alexander Hamilton, whom Pound had termed "the Prime snot in ALL American history." In early manuscripts Williams had also intended to vilify Hamilton as the Federalist who had promoted industry which eventually brought pollution and slums to the Passaic River. If vilifying Hamilton had still been Williams' major objective by the time he was finishing Book Two, he had material on hand for the job. Instead, he chose to focus without external comment on Hamilton's Federalist position on taxes and to see Hamilton's creation of The Society for Useful Manufactures as a means of producing taxable income. Williams was not siding with Pound in economic matters as some critics would
believe. He was associating Pound's money mania with Eliot's religious fervor.

For years, Pound had tried to urge his fiscal policies on his friends and for a period in the thirties, Williams had belonged to the American Social Credit Movement. When some factions of the Social Credit movement began to back the Fascists, however, Williams abandoned the movement and in 1943 the official American branch disbanded. Gorham Munson, Williams' friend and leader of the ASCM wrote essays and a book to defend the principles of social credit while also showing how some members of the movement had been duped into false political ideologies. Williams no doubt viewed Pound as one of those who had been duped, and this was part of the reason for Williams' attempt to break off relations with Pound altogether at the end of 1946. Pound had been talking down to Williams again about Williams' lack of understanding in financial matters and had evidently contacted some of his friends who were still involved with the Social Credit movement in America and asked them to get in touch with Williams to set him straight.

In January of 1947, when Williams was working to correlate his materials for Book Two, he received from Clara and Alfredo Studer a mimeographed letter and pamphlet of propaganda about social credit, sent at Pound's request. This must have seemed to Williams to be the perfect document to illustrate Pound's evangelistic approach to
economics, for Williams wrote above the letter "following the preacher's clownish talk" and decided to run it side by side with the sermon. Later, when Williams selected segments from the letter, he chose the most cranky portions dealing with taxation and juxtaposed them to the Hamilton material which was interwoven with Ehrens' sermon. Though Williams would later show a greater appreciation for some of Pound's economic views, in early 1947, he was determined to expose them as merely another version of Eliot's ineffectual preaching.

Williams makes no judgment on the prose selections except for two brief poetic inserts. The first depicts an eagle—the national emblem—making itself small in an unsuccessful attempt "to creep into the hinged egg" (73). The passage suggests that the American nation can never return to a time before its hatching when states' rights could be put above the national interest. National assumption of state debts which Hamilton had urged may have given birth to a banking system Pound wanted to reform, but the nation couldn't return to a time without a national banking system and taxation to support it. The notion of returning to pre-Federalist fiscal policies is as simplistic as a bird attempting to return to its egg, thus the eagle can never pull its last leg back into the egg. The second insert mentions Washington's "coat of Crow-black homespun woven/ in Paterson," at least one positive local product to develop from Hamilton's economic vision for Paterson. Both
of these inserts undercut any serious support of Pound's views toward Hamilton or the Social Credit movement.

Although Eliot's religious perspective and Pound's economic perspective are the two major ideologies ridiculed in the second section, Vachel Lindsay and his socialist causes add a political dimension to the religious and economic themes. Early in his sermon, Ehrens proclaims, "I kept on making money, more and more of it, but it didn't make me good." Although this is part of the lesson about spiritual blessings, the sermon is interrupted by an ironic song, also about making money. Written in the rhythms of the refrain to "America the Beautiful," the song parodies Vachel Lindsay's singing poems which adapted rhythms of Negro spirituals and popular American music to a variety of topics, including politics.

America the golden!  
with trick and money  
damned  
like Altgeld sick  
and molden  
we love thee bitter  
land  

Like Altgeld on the  
corner  
seeing the mourners  
pass  
we bow our heads  
before thee  
and take our hats  
in hand (68)

John Peter Altgeld is honored in Lindsay's "Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan" and is eulogized in "The Eagle that is Forgotten." Williams presents Lindsay's hero, however,
as "sick and molden," the broken man whose idealistic causes have failed. As governor of Illinois after the Haymarket Riots, Altgeld had been sympathetic to the workers' cause and had pardoned those rioters convicted of complicity in the riots. He also refused to call out the National Guard at the time of the Pullman strike so that President Grover Cleveland had to send in federal troops to break the strike. Ironically, Altgeld's stand for the workers in both instances resulted in his own political downfall. He was defeated in the next election. The mourners in Williams' parody mourn the defeat of the workers in a world where love of money replaces love of country, but the speaker of the parody also recognizes the helplessness of anyone who tries to remedy the situation. Altgeld's social sympathies were no more effective than Lindsay's embrace of socialism, and Lindsay, a disillusioned man, committed suicide in 1931.

In the context of Klaus Ehrens' sermon, Lindsay's socialism which was proclaimed with religious fervor is another ideology that misses its mark due to ineffectual language. Lindsay is one more poet who has prostituted his knowledge of spoken American by turning to "specialized interests." By the mid-forties, Williams was skeptical of most organized movements, even those which appeared to benefit the downtrodden. The recent war had shown all too clearly how some groups could be used against the very causes they promoted.
Though "America the Golden" introduces Lindsay mainly through parodying his structural approach to poetry and diminishing his political hero, Klaus Ehrens' sermon and the passages on economics are more like caricatures of Eliot's religious convictions and Pound's economic proclamations. Both emphases are overly simplified with their failing features exaggerated. Ehrens' sermon stressing the spiritual benefits of poverty plus his lack of a congregation suggest an outdated message but also an attempt to make poverty palatable. In one early manuscript, Williams notes, "No church has anything to do with religion, all are institutions for the regulation of men in whom religious qualities exist." Although he does not use these words in the final poem, Williams opens the second section by suggesting that the church, the government and industry are all capable of blocking the masses of men from a better life. The irony in the second section is that Eliot, Pound and Lindsay have been drawn into movements which appear to benefit the people but which Williams believed "blocked" them as surely as communism or any ideology which doesn't allow the masses, or "the Great beast," in Hamilton's terms, to think and make decisions for themselves.

As part of Faitoute's thoughts about the minister, Williams includes a satirical epitaph. In the four-stanza epitaph, Christ is described as "child of Pericles/ and femina practa" rather than as child of God (72). The fact that he is "remembered as of/ the open tomb" suggests that
the resurrection and all its association is a Christian means of controlling man's actions comparable to the statesmanship and military control exercised by Pericles in an earlier era. The satiric epitaph is one more traditional form which Williams adapts to his own purposes and which proves Faitoute can do all.

Williams concludes his poetry in the second section with an ironic version of another outdated form, the lyrical monologue which Williams writes as a prayer. In one early manuscript, the prayer was entitled "Address to the Deity." Williams' deity, however, is a strange and subtle god who could weep while hearing prayer and who calms not by actively intervening in man's affairs but by sleeping. In the second stanza of Williams' monologue, the deity becomes even more complex:

You also, I am sure, have read Frazer's Golden Bough. It does you justice—a prayer such as might be made by a lover who appraises every feature of his bride's comeliness, and terror—terrors to him such as one, a man married, feels toward his bride— (74-75)

Although Williams uses traditional Biblical imagery of the bride and groom to describe man's relation to God, he injects an unusual note of terror. Ironically, the terror relates to Frazer's *Golden Bough*, a fit prayer to any modern god and the very book Eliot had once called "one which has influenced our generation profoundly." Since Frazer traced modes of thought from the magical to the religious
and finally to the scientific, his book can hardly be called a prayer to the traditional Christian God. It is, however, a guide to some of the history in *Paterson,* for Williams planned to include references to witchcraft and Indian magic in Book Three just as he includes religion in Book Two. He had also saved material related to Madame Curie for a scientific emphasis in Book Four. Illustrations of all three modes of thought not only proved Williams could do as much as any other poet, but also provided him with material to continue the satiric portraits he had begun in Book One. The deity Williams addresses in prayer is as subtle and elusive as Williams' own poem. Though the deity appears at one point to be some unchanging principle in a changing world, Williams admits the futility in seeking such a deity away from home territory. He will not move to another culture as Eliot and Pound had done. The final irony of Williams' prayer is that even recognition of such a comprehensive deity leads not to hope but to "despair!" Section two closes with Faitoute no closer to finding a solution for his people than he had been when he began his climb up the mountain.

The third section opens with Faitoute's attempt to pull himself out of the despair generated by his experiences in the two earlier sections. It also opens with another lyric, another demonstration that Williams, as Faitoute, can do all. The lyric suggests that any poet, presumably including Eliot and Pound, who attempts to
develop theories from past knowledge will fail. Both in content and structure, the lyric suggests how man's mind attempts to fill vacancies in knowledge with past information when the better approach at a particular time would be to accept the gap and seek the discovery any gap in knowledge implies.

Look for the null
defeats it all
the N of all
equations .
that rock, the blank
that holds them up
which pulled away--
the rock's
their fall. Look
for that null
that's past all
seeing
the death of all
that's past
all being. .

But Spring shall come and flowers will bloom
and man must chatter of his doom . . (77)

In this lyric, the rock represents any theory, belief or concept that will serve to fill the gap for all equations or that can function in all of life's changing situations. Since the lyric appears after the section which contains a caricature of Eliot and Pound as promoters of religious and economic theories, the rock could represent religious dogma, economic theory or any other concept upon which man grounds his beliefs and guides his life. When
such a rock is removed, both theory and theoretician fall. To avoid such a fall, the poet is urged to search for that "null" or blank that will obliterate past theories and open the way to future discoveries. Williams believed America's lack of a metric to fit the American language was a blank in knowledge, a gap that needed to be filled but that other poets kept filling with partial kinds of knowledge not related to the major task at hand. The failures of others are described in the first four and a half brief two-line stanzas which rely on speech phrases rather than on traditional rhyme or rhythm. When Williams directly addresses his readers in the next seven lines, he continues to use line breaks to stress his meaning rather than his rhythm. Had he run the last seven lines of the short stanzas together and used "seeing" and "being" as end rhymes, the very rhythm would have interfered with his meaning. The two long lines which conclude the lyric are traditional iambic tetrameter and, like their subject matter, are retrogressive. They suggest that man would rather see a rebirth of nature as the ironic reminder of his own doom than as a spur toward his own new birth. The relationship of this thought to The Waste Land and April as the "cruelest month" is probably intentional.

In sharp contrast to the summary of failure in traditional metrics at the close of the opening lyric, Williams continues with a lyrical meditation based on American speech rhythms and written in the triadic line he would
later associate with his discovery of the variable foot. The lyric is a meditation on discovery born of defeat, for it is his descent down the mountain that brings Faitoute a new recognition of his quest.

The descent made up of despairs and without accomplishment realizes a new awakening: which is a reversal of despair. (78)

Faitoute's "new awakening" can occur only as he recognizes the failures of past poets and attempts to decipher the language of the falls. Faitoute listens for the language while both dogs and trees support his rejection of the minister's propaganda.

Listen! — the pouring water! The dogs and trees conspire to invent a world—gone!

Bow, wow! A departing car scatters gravel as it picks up speed!

Outworn! le pauvre petit ministre did his best, they cry, but though he sweat for all his worth no poet has come .

Bow, wow! Bow, wow!

Variously the dogs barked, the trees stuck their fingers to their noses. No poet has come, no poet has come. —soon no one in the park but guilty lovers and stray dogs .

Unleashed! (79)

Poets who appear in Book Two have good intentions, but they fail in part because they are leashed to past
poetic conventions and in part through embracing single-minded ideologies. Only when the Sunday crowd has left the park to "guilty lovers and stray dogs" can Faitoute begin to perceive consciously the significance of his Sunday afternoon stroll. A prose excerpt first indicates what has been lacking from the religious, political and economic themes:

Missing was the thing Jim had found in Marx and Veblen and Adam Smith and Darwin—the dignified sound of a great, calm bell tolling the morning of a new age . . . instead, the slow complaining of a door loose on its hinges. (80)

Eliot, Pound, Lindsay and other poets with religious, economic or political programs for improving the world have not provided a significant message for a new age. In opposition to them and their ideological programs, Faitoute will seek to accept and understand an imperfect world, to find a language which has developed indigenously from the land and the people, a language that can reveal the hidden beauty beneath what others have described as modern ugliness. Ironically, his intentions are misunderstood. The feminine voice of the mountain cries only for Faitoute to marry her and a poetess challenges Paterson without understanding the larger implications of her challenge. In the final pages of Book Two, Faitoute confronts the feminine voices of the mountain and also a feminine voice which began in Book One and has gathered intensity throughout Book Two.
The feminine voice of the mountain reaffirms the earlier message of the dogs and the trees that no poet has yet come to interpret the new language. In a series of dialogs, "She" challenges Faitoute to marry her and be reconciled to his world, thus to be a realist rather than a romantic who seeks an ideal world. The advice is ironic, for Williams believed himself to be neither romantic nor realist and thought the distinction one more relic of the poetic past. From 1934, the time his first Collected Poems was published, Williams' work had been tagged as "anti-poetic," a term Wallace Stevens used in his preface to the collection. Stevens had called Williams a romantic who had developed a "passion for the anti-poetic" to counteract his tendency toward sentimentality. Stevens had then gone on to use one particular poem from the collection to illustrate how the tendency toward "the unreal is necessary to fecundate the real; something of the sentimental is necessary to fecundate the anti-poetic." Calling himself a "Linnaeus of aesthetics," Stevens suggested "assigning a female role to the unused tent in 'The Attic Which is Desire' and a male role to the soda sign," then noticing how often in Williams' poems "the essential poetry is the result of the conjunction of the unreal and the real, the sentimental and the anti-poetic, the constant interaction of two opposites." When the blossoming mountain woman urges Faitoute to marry her, she recalls the botanical union Stevens had suggested in Williams' poetry. Williams
plays with the botanical association when, in anger at the dwarf and the minister, Faitoute suffers a strange metamorphosis:

From his eyes sparrows start and sing. His ears are toadstools, his fingers have begun to sprout leaves (his voice is drowned under the falls). (83)

As part of the landscape, Faitoute must now worry not only about "insects," possibly the grasshoppers who appeared earlier, but also about "pulpy weeds" which can "blot out" his new botanical identity. When the feminine voice insists on marriage, her words are arranged to resemble a waterfall in the manner of some E. E. Cummings poems, and she reminds Faitoute of Sarah Cumming's leap "without a language, tongue-tied/ the language worn out" (83-84).

Williams had been avoiding a worn-out language during his entire career. If his poems had been merely a marriage of the sentimental and antipoetic, he would have drowned in the stream of language as surely as Sarah Cumming had drowned in Book One. The mock marriage suggestion provides both an imaginative and humorous adaptation of Stevens' suggestion in the old preface and a way of repeating Williams' central language theme.

Williams reiterates the old Stevens' dictum on still another level when he concludes Book Two with the shrill climax to another male-female dialogue which began in Book One. From the beginning, Cress, the poetess, has considered herself "more the woman than the poet" (7), yet she
begins her relationship with Dr. P. by inquiring about her poems. Her anger grows as Dr. P. offers only literary and financial aid rather than a close personal relationship. The closing six pages of Book Two present her impassioned accusation that Dr. P. separates his life from his literature: "The very circumstances of your birth and social background provided you with an escape from life in the raw; and you confuse that protection from life with an inability to live—and are thus able to regard literature as nothing more than a desperate last extremity resulting from that illusionary inability to live" (91). Though the letters are from Marcia Nardi, the real poetess whom Williams had briefly befriended and sponsored in the early forties, they are signed "La votre C." Williams uses the signature to identify Nardi with Criseyde, the unfaithful mistress to Troilus, the woman who betrayed him even as she wrote her letters of love. Nardi's challenge to Williams is as ironic as Criseyde's protestations of love for Troilus. If Williams had offered Nardi the personal relationship she wanted, he would have abandoned the literary crusade he believed she and other people in her circumstances really needed.

The Chaucer allusion may have prompted another association in Williams' mind, for Williams saw Chaucerian touches in the early poetry of Wallace Stevens. By signing Nardi's letters "La votre C," Williams may also have intended to highlight the resemblance of her argument to
one of Stevens' best known early poems, "The Comedian As the Letter C." In this poem, Stevens had explored the problem of the artist's relation to his environment, the very problem Cress accuses Paterson of avoiding.

In Stevens' poem, Crispin, the hero, moves through a succession of events as he develops from romantic to realist, the path Stevens had suggested Williams also followed. Crispin finally asserts his realism when he marries, taking on the role of husband, father and good citizen, even though it means giving up his role of poet. In her letters, Cress is as unrelenting as Stevens' poem had been in asserting the pernicious effects of life's mundane realities. Like Crispin, Cress finds her imaginative source drying up as she is faced with life's actualities. Still, Cress urges Dr. P. to understand her world as passionately as the mountain woman urges Faitoute to marry her. Faitoute does not marry the mountain woman but instead returns to a poem he has previously written and examines the structure. Paterson does not accept Cress's world by establishing a liaison with Cress but goes on to another woman, the Beautiful Thing Williams had written about even before he had met Marcia Nardi. In Book Three, Beautiful Thing becomes the woman who represents an unarticulated language and beautiful spirit hidden by her broken nose and lower class Negro status. Ironically, Paterson deserts Cress for the very purposes she urges upon
him. He will portray an ineffable spirit which can be
found even among those who are discriminated against and
oppressed. He will acknowledge and celebrate this spirit
without resorting either to sentimentality or antipoetic
devices.

When Book Two was published, several critics ques-
tioned Williams' use of the long prose pieces from Cress
believing that her letters were obtrusive and unrelated to
the text. Actually, Cress was the real voice behind the
feminine mountain woman who claimed within the text, "You
have abandoned me." In the poem, the mountain woman and
Cress are abandoned only temporarily so that Faitoute can
return to the task of seeking a language that will enrich
their lives, a language derived from such impassioned prose
as the very letters Cress has written, a language so di-
rectly associated to American life and the basic rhythms of
American speech that it will enable others to express their
intimate desires, a language that can reach into the plu-
ralistic world in which men and women live to bring the
real news to them in the form of literature. By abandoning
Cress, Paterson is free to serve her better precisely
through the literary work she decries.

Shortly after Book Two appeared in 1948, Horace
Gregory questioned Williams about the letters from Cress.
Williams revealed a little of how his mind worked in his
reply to Gregory:
Dear Horace: Glad to hear from you. The purpose of the long letter at the end is partly ironic, partly "writing" to make it plain that even poetry is writing and nothing else—so that there's a logical continuity in the art, prose verse: an identity.

Frankly I'm sick of the constant aping of the Stevens' dictum that I resort to the antipoetic as a heightening device. That's plain crap—and everyone copies it. Now Rodman. The truth is that there's an identity between prose and verse, not an antithesis. It all rests on the same time base, the same measure. Prose, as Pound has always pointed out, came after verse, not before it—. No use tho trying to break up an error of that sort when it begins to roll. Nobody will attempt to think, once a convenient peg to hang his critical opinion on without thinking is found.

But specifically, as you see, the long letter is definitely germane to the rest of the text. It is psychologically related to the text—just as the notes following The Waste Land are related to the text of the poem. The difference being that in this case the "note" is subtly relevant to the matter and not merely a load for the mule's back. That it is not the same stuff as the poem but comes from below 14th St. is precisely the key. It does not belong in the poem itself any more than a note on Dante would.

And, if you'll notice, dogs run all through the poem and will continue to do so from first to last. And there is no dog without a tail. Here the tail has tried to wag the dog. Does it? (God help me, it may yet, but I hope not!)42

Nardi's letters are the tail that has tried to wag Williams' doggy poem, but Williams must have hoped his readers would see the irony of her challenge in relation to the entire book. Book Two is a rejection of those who have pronounced what a poet should write and of those who have pronounced how a poet should write. Like the ironic "communications from the Pope and Jacques Barzun" mentioned in Book One, the letters from Cress have told Paterson how he
should employ his talents. When Faitoute abandons Cress to examine the structure of a love lyric, he is showing the same resistent stubbornness that Williams showed when he resisted the attempts of others who wanted to tell him what or how to write.

"Sunday in the Park" is more than a depiction of the people who inhabit Paterson's world. It is also a demonstration that Williams can do all that Eliot, Pound, Lindsay, Cummings and other poets can do and more. In addition to playing with the myth he had created in Book One, Williams creates contemporary characters with dual identities both to fit the American scene and continue his satiric portraits. He also invests a variety of traditional forms with ironic meanings. As he rejects ideas associated with other poets, he simultaneously presents his own poetic principles, views of language he believed were associated with twentieth century modes of thought in mathematics and science.

Allegorically, Book Two continues the story of literary giants competing to find answers to man's problems in a complex pluralistic world. Those who turn to any single-minded solution such as religion, economics or politics are as sterile as the doggy poems leashed to their masters by artificial forms and outdated ideas. Fertility can be achieved only by reverting to the drunken abandon that gives free play to natural impulses and to the spirit of discovery. A marriage of the poet to his landscape can
only be accomplished through discovery of language which can describe the world without artificial distinctions between realism and romance. The poet who will find such a language must abandon others who would direct his work in order to follow his own sense of purpose.

Although the allegory and the foreground of the poem draw closer in Book Two than in Book One, critics continued to read the poem as a serious epic. As they missed the allegory which unifies the entire poem, they also found more and more fault with the seemingly disparate material Williams introduced. By 1948, however, Williams had an established literary position, and despite a growing disfavor with later books of Paterson, he would continue to occupy a major position among American writers. With or without appreciation of the comic dimension of his poem, he would never again be relegated to the literary sidelines. His own literary reputation would grow to match the stature of his giant city-poet Paterson.
NOTES

CHAPTER V

1 Letters from Williams to Laughlin, May 15, 1945, and June 13, 1947.

2 Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Sept. 7, 1945.


5 Whittemore, pp. 293-294.

6 Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Aug. 13, 1946.

7 Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Dec. 28, 1946.


9 Yale manuscript: Notes and Early Drafts for Book II. Paterson, pp. 105 and 107.

10 SUNY manuscript E18.

11 Williams, Selected Letters, p. 253.

12 SUNY E17, SUNY E18 and Yale: Early drafts for Book IV all contain material indicating they were written before 1948. E17 includes a reference to the "preacher's clownish talk" and the parody "America the Golden." E18 includes the polemic against critics which appears in Book One, p. 32, the prayer entitled "Address to the Deity" and the dogs' assertion that "no poet has come." Early drafts for Book IV include an early version of the mock drama featuring a boyfriend who is a minister and sells church real estate. A letter from Williams to Laughlin, Dec. 23, 1946, suggests that Book Two and Book Three could be published in a single volume, but Williams continues, "I want to save Part IV for separate publication. I have to do it that way for private reasons linked with the story as well as because I want to study that book carefully before releasing it."

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Letter from Williams to Charles Abbott, May 9, 1947.


SUNY manuscript E20.


SUNY manuscript E18.

SUNY manuscript E20.


SUNY manuscript E20.


Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Jan. 23, 1942.


Pound, The Cantos, p. 103. Although Pound frequently uses caps throughout The Cantos, Williams' use of the dog restriction is much like Pound's use of a sign in Canto 22:

---

NO MEMBER OF THE MILITARY OF WHATEVER RANK IS PERMITTED WITHIN THE WALLS OF THIS CLUB
---
It saddens me and humiliates me to have to say that I have broken with old Ezra finally. I feel somewhat small about it since he is under confinement in a mental hospital at the moment but my own self-respect (whatever the hell that is worth) demanded it. I just couldn't go on swallowing his guff— even for old time's sake, it depressed me to read his letter since, from his point of view, I don't doubt that he is at least arguably in the right. But I'll be damned if I have to take that kind of twaddle from him or anybody else. I know he's got to talk down to somebody, especially his close friends, in order that he may feel up. And I know that a person is morally bound at times to "play dead" for one's friends. However there is a limit to all that and, finally, I reached it with dear asinine ol' Ezra. I couldn't take any more even to help him over his difficulty.

42. Williams, *Selected Letters*, pp. 265-266.
CHAPTER VI

DESTRUCTION BEFORE DISCOVERY

Williams worked on Book Three from the winter of 1947-48 to the summer of 1949. Entitled *The Library* even in his earliest outline, the book contains Williams' strongest attack on excessive erudition and the master poets who wrote highly allusive poetry. The attack occurs as part of Faitoute's search for the beauty he could not find in the park, his search for a language and a form that can communicate the American experience in the twentieth century. The search moves in two directions: toward the condemnation of language related to old poetic forms and outmoded poetic devices and toward the discovery of the essence of America and the American language. But destruction of the old must precede discovery of the new.

Book Three is set in the library where Faitoute examines books and newspapers about Paterson's history and reads of the cyclone, fire and flood which devastated the city in 1902. Unable to focus his mind entirely on the past, Faitoute finds his thoughts drifting to the world outside the library, a world more real than any book, a world seeking articulation. Though he has sought the library as a place of relief from the torrent of language pouring through his mind, he gradually finds it more like a
prison and, in the end, clamors for release, for return to the real world, the only place where a poet can discover his own language and learn to appreciate his own environment.

In the early forties, Williams must have considered the library as a perfect setting to satirize the element which most separated him from Pound and Eliot— their erudition. Early in their careers, Pound and Eliot had established themselves as book poets. Both studied past literature and literary forms. Both filled their poems with literary allusions, with references to varied cultures and varied historical eras. Both sought renewal for the present by turning to the past. Both published essays asserting the value of literary tradition. Pound influenced the reading of both his contemporaries and poets who followed. An entire cult of criticism grew up around Eliot’s work, work which influenced Hart Crane and a host of minor poets. What better place for an attack on erudition than the institution symbolic of such a movement, the library.

But the literary scene had changed since the early forties. By the time Book Three was a work in progress, Williams had been favorably compared to Eliot and Crane. Reviewers also examined his second book of *Paterson* alongside Pound’s *Pisan Cantos*, praising Williams as highly as Pound. While Pound received the Bollingen Prize for his *Pisan Cantos*, Williams received the Russell Loines Memorial Award from the American Institute of Arts and Letters and
became a fellow of the library of Congress, the very group which had granted the Bollingen Prize to Pound. Williams was taking his place among the literary giants even as he was committed to a poem in which he had planned to attack them. Book Three would continue the attack, but the portrait of Pound would become more sympathetic as Williams renewed his acquaintance with his old friend and reiterated his sonship even though his original plan called for an assertion of his differences from both Pound and Eliot. He would, in addition, strengthen the link between Eliot and Crane as he expanded on their obscurity and the mystical qualities of their work.

Unlike Books One, Two and Four, Book Three had been only sketchily planned prior to late 1947. Though Williams used some segments from a poem published in 1938 before he had determined his satiric emphasis, he added new stanzas to these episodes consistent with his later comic perspective. He also shifted his satiric focus from Eliot's formalism and ineffective preaching, which he had parodied in Book Two, to the liturgical element in Eliot's early religious poetry and the sophisticated symbolism in Four Quartets. Many of Williams' early notes, drafts and thematic sketches were written in February of 1948 while he was hospitalized recovering from a heart attack. During this period, he also began work on a talk to be given in July at the University of Washington. That talk, "The Poem as a Field of Action," would go through seven drafts over the
intervening five months, and these drafts reveal much of Williams' thinking which was related to Book Three, the book that germinated during the same months Williams planned what he would say about modern poetry to a university audience.2

Early drafts indicate that Williams was studying Four Quartets carefully while working on his university talk. The focus of his presentation was to be "a challenge to the more staid academic tradition of English verse." In one draft, Williams points out that Eliot has "embraced the stability of the British tradition," but Williams also admits that Eliot "more than any other British poet induced change into the British stock." Williams is careful, however, to distinguish "the subject matter of Mr. Eliot's philosophy from his style," and even when referring to structural innovation, Williams notes "the timidity with which Mr. Eliot approaches the same subject in Four Quartets." Williams was willing to grant Eliot recognition for his role in poetic change, but he was careful to add that the moderns had influenced each other and that Eliot's experiments were not original.

In another draft, Williams warns against those who use poetry to promote their own ideologies: "the poem is constantly in danger of being taken over by the party-line boys of all complexions." In Book Two, Williams had attacked poets who used the poem for ideological purposes,
and he was writing his address about the time Book Two was being circulated.

In still another draft, Williams explains his attitude toward attacking other poets; his position is far more generous than it had been when he was first planning Paterson. By 1948, Paterson appeared to be a successful poem and Williams could afford the kind of gentlemanly remark he later removed when part of his address was included in Selected Essays. "If we attack, in the arts, it is not to kill the individual but to annihilate his argument. In fact under those circumstances attack becomes a sort of courtesy to an opponent, for we do not attack where attack is unnecessary but only where we wish to do honor to an opponent. My attack is upon a stasis, as I see it, which if broken up benefits the whole prosody." Though Williams primarily attacked formal prosody in his speech, in Book Three of Paterson he would also attack the entire academic approach to poetry, and part of this attack had been planned long before Williams took such a courteous attitude.

Drafts prepared originally for Book Two and written even before Book One already mention the series of natural disasters which parody Eliot's Four Quartets to provide both the major content and the allegorical framework for Book Three. These disasters first appeared as part of a passage which Williams eventually cut and divided; one part would become an overview of the entire poem and the other
would become the single most polemical passage in Book One. Both passages would be cut and polished after Williams decided to present his parodies without comment and to rely heavily on double entendre for other satiric purposes. The segments Williams finally chose to use would provide a gradual build-up to the attack on erudition which culminates in Book Three.

Although Williams' decision to rely on double entendre for much of his satire precluded mentioning some of the elements in his early summary, the composite passage provides a good index to Williams' early multiple objectives for his poem. It also shows how clearly the natural disasters which Williams eventually associated with Four Quartets were originally associated with his attack on the new critics:

:a local pride; sping, summer, fall and the sea; a confession; a basket; a column; a reply to Greek and Latin with the bare hands; a dispersal and a metamorphosis; a gathering up; a summary of poetic devices; a city; a river; from then to now; rock and water; a personification; a submersion; a history of desire:

in distinctive terms; by multiplication a reduction to one; man and woman; a man among women; one woman among many; a city as one man; a city of women; the defects of conscience; daring; contumacy; drought, cyclone, fire and flood;

an enforced pause; an identification and a plan for action to supplant a plan for action; taking up of slack.

We go on living, we permit ourselves to continue; drought, fire, cyclone and flood but certainly not for the university, what they publish
severally or as a group: clerks

got out of hand--

spirited on their thought like roasted hogs.

When Williams decided to use the first three paragraphs as an introduction to his entire poem, he cut and modified them to better suit his developing plans for a hidden satiric message. Some of the elements he eliminated from the introduction are of particular importance. Nowhere in the final poem does he tell his readers he is providing "a summary of poetic devices," yet all sorts of poetic devices appear throughout Paterson, often as parodies and nearly always with ironic implications. Williams also eliminated from his introduction all references to a man and his women in favor of presenting an entire series of women who would serve both his allegorical and satirical purposes. Since part of Williams' satire involves a personification of his local landscape, he also eliminated both "rock and water" and "a personification." Finally, he eliminated references to the natural disasters which were so closely associated with his polemic against academia. The polemic, itself, more fully developed, appears in the third section of Book One:

We go on living, we permit ourselves
to continue—but certainly
not for the university, what they publish

severally or as a group: clerks

got out of hand forgetting for the most part
to whom they are beholden.
spitted on fixed concepts like roasting hogs, sputtering, their drip sizzling in the fire (32)

The attack here is primarily against critics, particularly those related to the universities. In Book Two, however, Faitoute also sees the poem itself rivalled by the minister's ranting and laments "that the poet,/ in disgrace, should borrow from erudition (to/ unslave the mind). . ." (80). By Book Three, Williams mounts his full attack on the poets whose work has fostered erudition. Eliot and Pound are the chief targets, and Four Quartets provides Williams with his device for organizing the book.

Williams organizes his three sections about the library in relation to the February fire, March flood and freak tornado which followed the flood, three natural disasters which devastated the city of Paterson in 1902. 5 Williams, however, changes the historic order of these three events to better fit his parodies of Eliot's Four Quartets. In Four Quartets, Eliot had separated the physical universe into the four elements of air, earth, water and fire, stressing the symbolism of each element in a different quartet but also fusing them all as part of a larger contrast between temporal and spiritual values. By focusing on the cyclone, the fire and the flood, Williams had three historic events to parody Eliot's uses of air, fire and water. By adding a reference to sand and to the muddy residue which was created by the flood, Williams adds the fourth element of earth. Even in his earliest draft, he
probably intended to parody Eliot's use of the four elements, for he had projected a drought in addition to other historic calamities. The drought would have paralleled Eliot's reference to drouth and provided a means for introducing the element of earth but was abandoned as Williams found ways that sand and mud could better be used for the same purpose.

Eliot's symbolic use of the four elements in *Four Quartets* was far more sophisticated than his use of fire and water had been in *The Waste Land*. In the earlier poem, fire had symbolized lust, one aspect of the modern world's spiritual sterility and water had served its traditional purpose as a symbol of regeneration. In *Four Quartets*, each of the elements serves several purposes without being tied to a single symbolic frame of reference and Eliot pulls all the elements together in his final Quartet.

Air as wind is the element introduced in "Burnt Norton," the first Quartet. By equating a wind that sweeps across cities of England with a belching forth of souls "driven on the wind" at the entrance to Hell in Dante's *Inferno*, Eliot compares the plight of modern man with Dante's opportunists whose lives were neither good nor evil but were led totally for themselves. The analogy depends upon a reader recognizing the reference to Dante's third canto.

Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind That blows before and after time, Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs
Time before and time after.
Eruption of unhealthy souls
Into the faded air, the torpid
Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of
London,
Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate.  

In "East Coker," the second Quartet, wind becomes part of a pattern of continual death and rebirth, then reaches cyclonic fury in an apocalyptic passage on war which also associates the wind with fire:

Thunder rolled by the rolling stars
Simulates triumphal cars
Deployed in constellated wars
Scorpion fights against the Sun
Until the Sun and Moon go down
Comets weep and Leonids fly
Hunt the heavens and the plains
Whirled in a vortex that shall bring
The world to that destructive fire
Which burns before the ice-cap reigns

Though wind and fire converge for destruction in this passage, only one element supports the major theme of each Quartet. Air as wind dominates "Burnt Norton," the first Quartet. Earth as the element which symbolizes the cycle of vegetal rebirth dominates "East Coker," the second Quartet. Water becomes the dominant element in "The Dry Salvages," symbolizing both the outer sea of time and life and the inner flow of blood which sustains life. Most important of all, fire is the dominant element and central symbol of "Little Gidding," the last Quartet. Though each Quartet stresses a single element, Eliot frequently uses the elements in concert for complex imagery and interrelated symbolism.
Williams, too, uses the four elements in a variety of ways, for he parodies Eliot's uses even as he applies the elements to his own purposes. In the first section of Book Three, Williams also begins with wind as an evocation of the past by way of literature but without the use of obscure literary allusion. For Faitoute, the library offers a refuge from the sound of the falls reverberating in his mind because books provide a false sense of reality.

For there is a wind or ghost of a wind
in all books echoing the life
there, a high wind that fills the tubes
of the ear until we think we hear a wind,
actual . (95)

Like Eliot, Williams also intensifies his wind as his poem progresses. Though he does not suggest the apocalypse, he does associate the wind with Hell and destruction, but the Hell is humorously local and the wind traps man in a library rather than in the antichamber to Hell. Once again, books and the library are denigrated, for they represent an escape into the past, a world that was once active and living but that now lives only in literature.

Blow! So be it. Bring down! So be it. Consume and submerge! So be it. Cyclone, fire and flood, So be it. Hell, New Jersey, it said on the letter. Delivered without comment. So be it!

Run from it, if you will. So be it.
(Winds that enshroud us in their folds-- or no wind). So be it. Pull at the doors, of a hot afternoon, doors that the wind holds, wrenches from our arms--and hands. So be it. The Library is sanctuary to our fears. So be it. So be it. --the wind that has tripped us, pressed upon us, prurient or upon the prurience of our fears --laughter fading. So be it. (97)
In addition to countering Eliot's use of wind in *Four Quartets*, this passage illustrates another device Williams uses in several sections of Book Three. "So be it," the literal translation of "Amen," resounds through the book as a liturgical response in most of the passages which parody Eliot. As a liturgical response, "so be it" not only adds emphasis to passages which stress destruction but also mocks Eliot's elevated uses of liturgical language in both his religious poems and plays.

Though Eliot briefly combined wind and fire in "East Coker," his major symbolic use of fire occurs in "Little Gidding." In this Quartet, he uses fire to symbolize two opposing states—a state of sin and a state of purgation. War, lust and all sins which man commits can be symbolized by fire. This sinful fire can be corrected only by purgatorial fire devised by God in His infinite love as a means of returning man to a state of grace. Man is redeemed from sin by God's "shirt of flame," purgation.

The dove descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Who then devised the torment? Love.
Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame
Which human power cannot remove.
We only live, only suspire
Consumed by either fire or fire.
If Eliot could play with fire as two opposing symbols, Williams would use it for even more purposes. As with the deliberate revisions of Eliot's passages on wind, Williams' dramatization of fire becomes a litany, but not a litany of sin and purgation. Williams' fire passage features objects which will be literally recreated by the very fire which destroys them.

An iron dog, eyes aflame in a flame-filled corridor. A dunkenness of flames. So be it. A bottle, mauled by the flames, belly-bent with laughter: yellow, green. So be it--of dunkenness survived, in guffaws of flame. All fire afire! So be it. Swallowing the fire. So be it. Torqued to laughter by the fire, the very fire. So be it. Chortling at flames sucked in, a multiformity of laughter, a flaming gravity surpassing the sobriety of flames, a chastity of annihilation. Recreant, calling it good. Calling the fire good. So be it. The beauty of fire-blasted sand that was glass, that was a bottle: unbottled Unabashed. So be it. (117)

The combination of laughter and drunkennes with sober­ety and chastity parodies the use of opposites and the resolution of opposites that permeates *Four Quartets*.

"Calling the fire good" recalls a line from the Good Friday section of "East Coker: "Again, in spite of that, we call this Friday good." The bottle, however, is called good because it has been transformed from a confining vessel to an unbottled molten flow. Eventually the bottle becomes "Hottest/ lips lifted till no shape but a vast/ molt of the news flows. Drink of the news, fluid to the breath."

Thus, the old bottle or traditional container for poetry
has been remolded into new fluid life. The transformation has been accomplished by the very flow of the lines and the sense of abandonment in both the language and the mode of address which slips from description to direct challenge and eventually even becomes a personification of the bottle. The bottle now proclaims itself in terms that associate Williams' poem not only with the symbolism of Four Quartets but also with prominent symbols from "Ash Wednesday" and The Waste Land:

Shouts its laughter, crying out—by
an investment of grace in the sand
—or stone: oasis water. (118)

In The Waste Land, Eliot had depicted a sterile world without the water of spiritual regeneration, a world of dry rocks and stony rubbish. In "Ash Wednesday," Eliot had depicted a desert but also the water of purification achieved through renunciation and prayer. In Four Quartets, purgatorial fire replaces water as a symbol of spiritual regeneration. By calling his torqued bottle an "investment of grace in the sand/ or stone," Williams can suggest the original production of the bottle from sand heated by fire while laughing at the symbolism of both Eliot's desert and stony rubbish without water. Through the bottle which has become a molten stream of news, Williams finds "oasis water," a new language which is an ironic answer to Eliot's desert. Even more ironically, however, Williams' bottle has not been produced by purgatorial fire but rather by a fire associated with passion and
sexual desire. The bottle has been "mauled by the fire," a suggestion of sexual assault. This mauling has both "deflowered" and "reflowered" the glass; the fire has destroyed in order to create something new. Thus, Williams deliberately revises Eliot's symbolism to give sexual desire a creative purpose, the direct opposite of sexual allusions in "The Fire Sermon" from Eliot's *Waste Land.*

The next stanza builds on this sexual passion and also suggests that Williams' multidimensional uses of fire are fully as successful as Eliot's.

Hell's fire. Fire. Sit your horny ass down. What's your game? Beat you at your own game, Fire. Outlast you:
Poet Beats Fire at Its Own Game! The bottle! the bottle! the bottle! the bottle! I give you the bottle! What's burning now, Fire?

The Library?

Whirling flames, leaping from house to house, building to building carried by the wind the Library is in their path

Beautiful thing! aflame . (118)

Williams' destruction of erudition works much like the destruction of an old bottle as fire destroys a library which contains books created by old passions which are now merely dead weight. The library can only become a beautiful thing when it burns, for it is the library which, in the twentieth century, has halted the national evolution of language and literature. Poets eager to follow the early Eliot and Pound turned to the past for both the content and
structure of their poetry. Critics, eager to interpret poetry steeped in erudition and literary tradition, had turned back to recover other literary periods, particularly the Middle Ages. This turn to erudition and tradition had produced literature farther and farther removed from ordinary American life and the common man or even from most readers who do not have specialized training in literature. When the library burns, erudition is destroyed to make way for new poetry drawn from life rather than from past literature. Thus, the historic fire provides both a means to ridicule the symbolism of *Four Quartets* and to continue Williams' allegory of the contemporary literary scene.

As with the fire, Williams uses the flood to focus his satire and to expand his allegory. The flood passages become Williams' way of associating Crane and Eliot and of addressing other literary trends which have contributed to the twentieth century literary scene. Even as he depicts the actual historic flood, Williams adds a pastiche of satiric commentary filled with echoes of Crane's and Eliot's work and culminating in a cry to build no more mystical bridges to the past.

Although Williams may first have intended the flood section primarily as part of his derision of the symbolism in *Four Quartets*, he had also promised in his very first book that a "white crane" would "settle later" in his poem. Williams evidently decided the logical place for Hart Crane's work to reappear in *Paterson* was in the flood
sequence during an attack on poems which cannot be understood without excessive exegesis. The decision was probably inspired or substantiated by the early 1948 publication of Brom Weber's biographical and critical study of Hart Crane. Weber traced not only the course of Crane's life but also the growth of his major poem, *The Bridge*. Using Crane's letters and various manuscripts, Weber revealed Crane's earliest plans and outline for his poem, stressing the poetic and critical influence of T. S. Eliot and the several influences which contributed to the poem's mysticism. Above all, Weber's book offered evidence that Crane's work was surviving, that it would be kept alive by the same kinds of critics who had probed every aspect of Eliot's early and later works. Weber's book must have revived and vindicated Williams' early ideas of associating Crane and Eliot as mystical poets.

Weber takes great pains to show how meticulously Crane had planned his poem and how carefully and painfully he revised every aspect of *The Bridge* from the original outline to last-minute corrections of individual lines and individual words. As if in response, Williams opens his flood section with an ironic warning of the danger of writing carefully. Such careful and controlled writing only adds to the flood of erudition and makes library burning a necessity. In contrast, Williams will "write carelessly so that nothing that is not green will survive" (129). Williams' manuscripts show that he was actually working
with extreme care, working hard to achieve the appearance of careless writing.

What Williams claims is careless writing begins, in fact, with a conglomeration of disparate images summarized by a quasi-metaphysical comment on the past which is completed by a rhythmic puzzle.

There is a drumming of submerged engines, a beat of propellers. The ears are water. The feet listen. Boney fish bearing lights stalk the eyes—which float about, indifferent. A taste of iodine stagnates upon the law of percentages: thick boards bored through by worms whose calcined husks cut our fingers, which bleed.

We walk into a dream, from certainty to the unascertained, in time to see from the roseate past a ribbed tail deploying

Tra la la la la la la la la
La tra tra tra tra tra tra tra

Mixed metaphors related to machines, the sea, the body and the business world are reminiscent of "Cape Hatteras," the fourth section of The Bridge and one of Crane's most ponderous attempts to link past and present through mystical vision and machine age metaphors. Williams' images are as difficult to untangle as Weber claimed Crane's symbols and images were in "Cape Hatteras." Although Crane's poem had invoked the past as a dream to counter present materialism, Williams characterized the past as a "ribbed tail" unfolding, ironically, into a sing-song rhythm and the discordant reversal of that rhythm. The entire passage
suggests experimentation both with metaphors and with rhythms, the kind of experimentation Weber claimed Crane had attempted in *The Bridge* with some success but had failed to complete successfully in "Cape Hatteras."

Williams' next passage turns to the historic flood which inundated Paterson but contains echoes of *Four Quartets* while simultaneously reintroducing Crane by a wordplay on his name similar to the one in Book One which had reserved his appearance for later in the poem.

Upon which there intervenes a sour stench of embers. So be it. Rain falls and surfeits the river's upper reaches, gathering slowly. So be it. Draws together, runnel by runnel. So be it. A broken oar is found by the searching waters. Loosened it begins to move. So be it. Old timbers sigh— and yield. The well that gave sweet water is sullied. So be it. And lilies that floated quiet in the shallows, anchored, tug as fish at a line. So be it. And are by their stems pulled under, drowned in the muddy flux. The white crane flies into the wood. So be it. Men stand at the bridge, silent, watching. So be it. So be it. (129, 130)

In addition to the liturgical response "so be it" which accompanies passages that revise aspects of Eliot's work, several touches suggest *Four Quartets* and one line introduces Hart Crane to the parody of mystical poetry. The "broken oar" recalls "the battered lobsterpot, the broken oar/ And the gear of foreign dead men" from the sea passage in "The Dry Salvages." 11 "Old timbers" and the "stench of embers" echo Eliot's phrase "old timbers to new fires" in "East Coker." 12 When the white crane flies into the wood, Williams is fulfilling a promise made in Book One
that "a white crane will fly/ and settle later!" (20) Now, in Book Three, Hart Crane's mysticism is settling into Eliot's *Sacred Wood*. For additional emphasis, Crane's bridge which had toppled in Book One now merges with Eliot's *Four Quartets* to form a bridge which remains standing in part because critics are content to quarrel over the meanings of obscure details and allusions. At this point, the flood becomes a flood of books in Faitoute's mind and the bridge a "made-arch," any carefully constructed poem which invites erudite interpretation but sadly still cannot be understood.

And there rises a counterpart, of reading, slowly, overwhelming the mind; anchors him in his chair. So be it. He turns *O Paradiso*! The stream grows leaden within him, his lilies drag. So be it. Texts mount and complicate themselves, lead to further texts and those to synopses, digests and emendations. So be it. Until the words break loose or—sadly hold, unshaken. Unshaken! So be it. For the made-arch holds, the water piles up debris against it but it is unshaken. They gather upon the bridge and look down, unshaken. So be it. So be it. So be it. (130)

When Faitoute exclaims "Oh Paradiso," Williams relates both *Four Quartets* and *The Bridge* to the most mystical and final book of Dante's *Divine Comedy* by a single impressionistic touch. The lilies that drag recall "Potomic lilies" that along with other flowers, herald "Easters of speeding light" in Crane's "Cape Hatteras." When the "made-arch holds," Eliot's and Crane's mystical bridges from one eternity to another resist both the flood of erudition and
the debris which is carried by the flood, but only temporarily.

Two items among the debris are a letter from Pound to Williams and Williams' ironic reply in the form of a well drilling report. In typical Pound fashion, the letter attempts to interest Williams in a variety of books concerning Pound's favorite subjects, including Greek tragedies, Frobenius on prehistoric art and, of course, Gesell on social credit. The letter probably has been edited and may have been slightly changed in the ways Williams changed so many of his prose selections. The letter is typeset as stanzas of poetry with the final stanza both summarizing the tone and content yet also confirming the father-son relationship between Pound and Williams.

& nif you want a reading list ask papa— but don't go rushin to read a book just cause it is mentioned eng passang. is fraugs . . . (138)

Not only does the letter highlight Pound's urging of erudition on other poets, but it also provides Williams with the opportunity for his own humorous reply. The next page carries an ironic answer in the form of a drilling report for an "Artesian Well at the Passaic Rolling Mill, Paterson." The title recalls the Preface to Paterson with its focus on rolling up a unified poem from a series of particulars. Since water is Williams' metaphor for language, an attempt to drill for water in home territory separates Williams from Pound and also stresses practical
knowledge rather than book knowledge as Williams' training for his craft. The report concludes when the drilling is abandoned, "the water being unfit for ordinary use" because it is too salty. Williams' use of water is indeed salty with satire and is neither traditional nor ordinary.

The letter from Pound and its ironic reply appear immediately after a page suggesting several trends which, like Williams' irony, may be battering at the arch of tradition, the carefully controlled poem. Among these trends are an emphasis on colloquial language, the influence of Dada and the subjective language of surrealism. The page begins with two fragments of conversation stressing casual language:

Hi, open up a dozen, make it two dozen! Easy girl!
You wanna blow a fuse? (137)

Beginning with the slangy question, some lines are slanted, giving the page a careless, casual look, a touch of Dada. The several items on the page are unrelated in content and diverse in style. They range through a weather comment and a 1949 date to the enigmatic "10,000 times plus April," possibly a reference to the opening line of The Waste Land. A brief spattering of French ironically salutes surrealist Antonin Artaud for his pure lines, and the page ends with a humorous commentary on euphemism and slang:
"Funeral designs" (a beautiful, optimistic word . . ) and "Plants" (it should be explained that in this case "plants" does NOT refer to interment.)

(137)

The page suggests that Dada and surrealism have helped to break up the old euphemistic language and are part of the debris battering against the made arch of traditional poetry. Like the irony of the well drilling report, these movements are carried along with the flood of erudite literature which the moderns have produced, but in themselves they are not enough to break down all the traditional elements that prevent a new and vital poetry. The flood must expend itself and subside in its own time.

As the flood subsides, both the countryside and Faitoute's mind are left with a residue of mud. Williams uses mud not only to complete his sardonic revisions of the four symbolic elements in Four Quartets by focusing on earth but also to indicate that Eliot's later poem, while it appears to be new, still has the old familiar smell.

When the water has receded most things have lost their form. They lean in the direction the current went. Mud covers them.

--fertile(?)mud.

If it were only fertile. Rather a sort of muck, a detritus, in this case—a pustular scum, a decay, a choking lifelessness—that leaves the soil clogged after it, that glues the sandy bottom and blackens stones—so that they have to be scoured three times when, because of an attractive brokenness, we take them up for garden uses. An acrid, a revolting stench comes out of them, almost one might say a granular stench—fouls the mind . . (140)
Allegorically, the passage recalls Eliot's useless search for fertility in *The Waste Land*, the poem most responsible for the flood of erudition which caused many of the younger poets to seek subjects rooted in past literature. The modern flood should have produced fertile poetry, but instead, the "muck" is clogged with "detritus," fragments of rock worn away by water, another reference to symbols frequently used by Eliot. The blackened stones which must be cleansed for garden uses may echo the "old stones that cannot be deciphered" in "East Coker" as well as "the rose garden" in "Burnt Norton." Their attractive brokenness probably refers to Eliot's effort in *Four Quartets* to break into newer rhythms while denouncing outdated poetic devices, a theme Williams recognized and praised in *Four Quartets* but one he believed Eliot had adopted from Pound and himself. Despite the attractive brokenness of the stones, to Faitoute they still reek of a dead philosophy, a "revolting stench," almost a "granular stench." Thus, *Four Quartets*, despite its emphasis on the continual need for structural change in poetry, still suffers from the search for spiritual fertility and the flood of erudition which began in *The Waste Land*. Faitoute must find a way to survive the flood.

How to begin to find a shape—to begin to begin again, turning the inside out: to find one phrase that will lie married beside another for delight. ? --seems beyond attainment. (140)
Although Faitoute is discouraged about the positive nature of his task, he knows he cannot turn to any of Eliot's traditional symbolism or to Crane's elaborate metaphors. In a final passage about the flood, Williams calls the flood an "edema," a tumor which results from an abnormal accumulation of fluid. The metaphor is apt for literature which results from an abnormal accumulation of erudition, and following it, Williams once more brings together *The Waste Land*, *Four Quartets* and *The Bridge*:

---the edema subsides

Who is it spoke of April? Some insane engineer. There is no recurrence. The past is dead. Women are legalists, they want to rescue a framework of laws, a skeleton of practices, a calcined reticulum of the past which, bees, they will fill with honey.

It is not to be done. The seepage has rotted out the curtain. The mesh is decayed. Loosen the flesh from the machine, build no more bridges. Through what air will you fly to span the continents? Let the words fall any way at all—that they may hit love aslant. It will be a rare visitation. They want to rescue too much, the flood has done its work. (142)

Eliot is the insane engineer who began *The Waste Land* by noting "April is the cruelest month," who portrayed a need for spiritual rebirth, who returned to past myths and traditional symbols to seek a means for renewal and a way to communicate his message. But Faitoute declares, "The past is dead." Those who wish to resurrect it are like women who seek to fill a traditional container with their
own secretions of sweetness. Eliot, however, is not the only insane engineer who has sought a recurrence of the past. Crane, too, had sought to link past and present, and had chosen a contemporary engineering miracle as his major symbol. Williams undoubtedly has Crane in mind when he calls on new poets to "Loosen the flesh/ from the machine" and "build no more/ bridges." Furthermore, he questions whether it is possible to find any symbol, technological or otherwise which will "span the continents." Rather, poets should write with greater abandon as the surrealists had urged. They should "let the words/ fall any way at all" instead of filling prescribed forms, rhymes and rhythms. Only then will they "hit love aslant." At this point in Book Three, "the flood has done its work," an implication that the earlier resistant "made arch" no longer stands in its original form.

Though the wind, fire and flood are forces of destruction associated with the library and excessive erudition, Williams also uses them as actual events which he describes with feeling and some fidelity to history. Thus, in addition to parodic and allegorical passages, there are moving descriptive passages which keep the reader aware of a surface related to the history of Paterson and the real world in which Williams exists. Williams' ability to combine satire and allegory with reality is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the "Beautiful Thing" passages in which he introduces a creative force to counter the destruction of
wind, fire and flood. Beautiful Thing is first and foremost a real black woman who may well have been a patient of Dr. Williams at one time. In Paterson, however, she also becomes the answer to excessive erudition, Williams' image for the beautiful but unappreciated American landscape and the unarticulated American language.

Beautiful Thing first appears in Book Three in reference to the falls which reverberate in Faitoute's mind. He thinks of the falls as a beautiful woman unable to find expression in language:

```
Beautiful thing,
my dove, unable and all who are windblown,
touched by the fire
and unable,
a roar that (soundless) drowns the sense
with its reiteration
unwilling to lie in its bed
and sleep and sleep, sleep
in its dark bed. (96-97)
```

Beautiful Thing is related to the language that pours over the falls, the language that fills Paterson's ears and disturbs his sleep. Unlike him, she is unwilling to sleep but seeks freedom and expression. In Book Three, Beautiful Thing appears whenever Faitoute begins to get bogged down in history or past political and social ideas. She becomes a powerful force in helping Faitoute realize that "The province of the poem is the world" (99), a world of the present. She becomes a contemporary daydream to counter the library's oppression.
a roar of books
from the wadded library oppresses him until
his mind begins to drift.

Beautiful thing:
--a dark flame,
a wind, a flood--counter to all staleness. (100)

Even before Williams began seriously considering satire as a possibility for his own long poem, he had created "Beautiful Thing" in a poem entitled "Paterson: Episode 17." In this poem, first published in 1938, Williams depicts a servant girl whose beauty includes the broken nose she has received in a recent beating, who is "drunk and bedraggled to release/ the strictness of beauty." When he returned to the early poem to incorporate Beautiful Thing into Book Three, Williams chose stanzas which told the story of her drunkenness and her beating as well as those stressing men's desire to possess the living spirit of the very thing they violate. Beautiful Thing can thus serve metaphorically for any traditional concept of beauty or language which must be violated if it is to again assume its once living spirit. During the decade which elapsed between Williams' first conception of Beautiful Thing and his incorporation of her into his long poem, he had expanded the poem to include ridicule, irony, parody, and satire. He added several new passages which would further clarify his own metaphor for Beautiful Thing and others which would counter poetic devices used by Crane, Eliot and Pound.
One passage Williams added contradicts Eliot's and Crane's uses of women as symbols. In "Ash Wednesday," Eliot had used a composite woman to symbolize spiritual grace. This composite woman is addressed in prayer as "Blessed sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain, spirit of the garden." In *The Bridge*, Crane had taken Pocahontas from Williams' *In the American Grain* and made her a "mythological nature-symbol" representing "the continent, or the soil." In Book Three, Williams reclaims his woman to give her new reality but also to associate her with the spirit of new American poetry. She becomes a cure for the illness of Crane's and Eliot's mystical poems, a symbolic woman who is drawn from real life and can thus express the reality of the world rather than a romantic vision of it.

From the beginning of Book Three, Faitoute's mind shifts between the historic accounts he finds in the library and his brief daydreams of Beautiful Thing. Though he attempts to apply himself to the library books and to find the living spirit which once created these books, he cannot bring his own passions to the past. His mind continues to drift until he settles into a long reverie about Beautiful Thing. The reverie begins with stanzas taken from Williams' earlier poem, but Williams adds an additional passage which links his portrayal of Beautiful Thing to women portrayed by Crane and Eliot.
Haunted by your beauty (I said)  
exalted and not easily to be attained, the  
whole scene is haunted:  

Take off your clothes,  
(I said)  
Haunted, the quietness of your face  
is a quietness, real  
out of no book.  

Your clothes (I said) quickly, while  
your beauty is attainable.  

Put them on the chair  
(I said. Then in a fury, for which I am  
ashamed)  

You smell as though you need  
a bath. Take off your clothes and purify  
yourself . . .  
And let me purify myself  
--to look at you,  
to look at you (I said)  

(Then, my anger rising) TAKE OFF YOUR  
CLOTHES! I didn't ask you  
to take off your skin. I said your  
clothes, your clothes. You smell  
like a whore. I ask you to bathe in my  
options, the astonishing virtue of your  
lost body (I said) .  

--that you might  
send me hurtling to the moon  
. . . let me look at you (I  
said, weeping) (105)  

The poignancy of this passage reinforces Williams'  
treatment of Beautiful Thing as a real woman and turns  
Faitoute into a frenzied lover. Yet the passage has an  
allegorical application in addition to its surface drama.  
Because her beauty comes "out of no book," Beautiful Thing  
belongs to the world rather than the library. Like the  
original Pocahontas, from In the American Grain, she is  
real as well as symbolic, and Williams uses the reality of
her nakedness to counter the artificiality Crane had imposed upon her when he made her the "physical body of the continent." Crane had depicted America as a woman in "Powhatan's Daughter," the second major section of *The Bridge*. He had taken both the name and a brief description of Pocahontas dancing naked in the marketplace from the quotation Williams had used years earlier. Crane also had described Columbus's vision of the new world as "kingdoms/naked in the / trembling heart—." Later, he had symbolized modern America also as a naked woman and had rhapsodized, "O Nights that brought me to her body bare!" In the Indian woman Pocahontas, he had found the symbol to unite his romantic vision of America's past to his hopes for her future. Crane, however, did not use water as a symbol of purification. The bath for purification suggests "Ash Wednesday" and Eliot's composite woman who "made strong the fountains and made fresh the springs." Eliot's lady is frequently identified by her veil and her clothing. Thus, when Williams combines Crane's naked woman with Eliot's symbolically dressed woman and has Faitoute order her to take off her clothes and bathe in his opinions, he is also suggesting that poetry must divest itself of traditional symbols, particularly symbols related to a mysticism that belongs to a myth of the past. In one early draft of Book Three, Williams had actually identified Beautiful Thing as poetry, but he abandoned such a clear-cut association as he began to use her for several varied purposes.
Through the remainder of the cyclone section, Williams associates Beautiful Thing with the kind of woman who generally have not been celebrated in poetry, women who have been damaged in some way, often sexually. He associates her with the spirit in women whom "Toulouse Lautrec witnessed" when he painted the prostitutes of France. Beautiful Thing becomes a woman marred and scarred but with a spirit and a beauty which are alive and vibrant, a real woman to serve as an image of the American land and language.

In the fire section, Williams adds another passage to passages from the early poem and links Beautiful Thing with Pound's work even as he continues the link with Eliot and Crane. Here, however, he incorporates Pound's techniques rather than countering them. Williams considered Pound as the one poet whose language frequently reaches a passionate colloquial rhythm sufficient to transcend traditional rhythms. To Williams, one of the values of Pound's excessive erudition had been Pound's ability to translate poetry from ancient languages into a contemporary American idiom. Thus, in the fire section, Beautiful Thing becomes "a defiance of authority" (119), "the dream of dead men" (122), and "the flame's lover" (123). She embodies the passion which once became poetry and which can again become poetry when it is tied to a living language. She is crass and scarred like the modern American language and her "vulgar-ity surpasses all perfections" (120), yet without her, "the
library is muffled and dead" (122). By inserting among the Beautiful Thing passages the colloquiel language of a letter from one young Negro to another (123, 124), Williams also identifies Beautiful Thing as those elements in the living growing language which most poets often fail to incorporate into their formal works.

Although Pound had been more modern in his language than most poets, even he frequently became unnecessarily erudite by clogging The Cantos with references to classical literature, architecture and art. Another passage Williams added to his original material on Beautiful Thing combines his own direct and forceful language with Pound's sometimes overly allusive language. In a second reverie, Faitoute remembers a doctor's call he once paid on the quiet, simpering servant girl in her basement bedroom. Though most of the reverie is straightforward narration and description, Faitoute does at one point call Beautiful Thing "Persephone/ gone to hell" (125), a reference typical to the allusions to classical myth which often pass with high speed through passages of The Cantos. When Faitoute recalls his mind to the library book before him, however, his references to Beautiful Thing take on the more heavily allusive nature of many passages on art in The Cantos. He now sees Beautiful Thing as "a docile queen" in a scene drawn from the famed medieval unicorn tapestries.
A tapestry hound
with his thread teeth drawing crimson from
the throat of the unicorn

. . . a yelping of white hounds
--under a ceiling like that of San Lorenzo, the long
painted beams, straight across, that preceded
the domes and arches
more primitive, square edged

. a docile queen, not bothered
to stick her tongue out at the moon, indifferent,
through loss, but .

queenly,
in bad luck, the luck of the stars, the black stars

. the night of a mine

Dear heart
It's all for you, my dove, my
changeling (126)

In addition to showing that Williams can do what Pound
has done, the passage links Beautiful Thing to poems by
Eliot, Crane and a host of other poets. The docile queen
in the unicorn tapestries is traditionally associated with
the Virgin Mary, one of the women symbolized by Eliot's
composite woman in "Ash Wednesday." Crane had also men­
tioned Mary, along with Eve and Magdaline, as the possible
woman of the "Southern Cross," his poem of intense desire
and longing for spiritual women symbolized by the immortal
constellation. When Williams describes the medieval queen
"in bad luck, the luck of the stars, the black stars," he
not only highlights his own Negro servant-girl's black skin
but also implies that she is the new embodiment of the
classical beauties mentioned by Pound and the symbolic
women used by Crane and Eliot. Her value is related
directly to the sense of her reality. Beauty no longer resides in a myth or an ideal which men cannot attain. Traditional women celebrated in past poetry have been replaced by a servant girl who, like the less decorous ceiling of San Lorenzo is "more primitive." Beautiful Thing is therefore a "changeling;" she shifts her shape in different eras just as the language must shift its shape to conform to a modern America and as poetry must find a new shape to accommodate the new language.

Williams concludes the reference to Beautiful Thing by combining Faitoute's avowal of tenderness with ironic advice drawn from the refrain of an evangelical hymn.

I can't be half gentle enough, half tender enough toward you, toward you, inarticulate, not half loving enough

BRIGHTen

where

you

are!

--a flame, black plush, a dark flame. (128)

"Brighten the corner where you are" is the refrain from a gospel hymn which urges Christians to do good in their own neighborhoods so their deeds can serve as examples to those who have strayed from the Christian faith. Ironically, as a real woman and as a metaphor for a ravaged land and language, Beautiful Thing can brighten her corner of the world far more than symbolic women drawn from old myths. Her
broken beauty lifts a landscape and language to a prominence it has been denied in past poetry.

In both the new material added to the Beautiful Thing sequence and his allegory associated with the four elements, Williams satirized Eliot and Crane far more than Pound. Although Pound had to be included as one of the erudite poets, in Book Three, Williams' portrait of Pound begins to assume a far more sympathetic quality. In his visit to St. Elizabeth's Hospital in October 1947, Williams had seen at firsthand the high price Pound had paid for his art; Pound's portrait had to be modified to accommodate new conditions. From the beginning of Paterson, Pound had been portrayed as a hero and a fool; as a father, but a dead father; as a daring diver into the river of language, but a diver who had drowned. By 1948, however, Pound's Pisan Cantos and his continued commitment to literature even during his incarceration at the Disciplinary Training Center near Pisa and later at St. Elizabeth's Hospital were beginning to outweigh his reputation as a traitor to his country. Though Williams had intended to attack Pound as well as Eliot for his emphasis on tradition and erudition, he could not ignore Pound's devotion to his craft even at the cost of imprisonment. Although it is not possible to be sure exactly when Williams introduced the theme of cost in Book Three, manuscripts indicate that he gave central importance to the theme at a late stage in the book's composition.  

By spring of 1949, when Book Three went to the
printer, Pound and his imprisonment provided a significant illustration of the cost some artists must pay for their beliefs as well as a metaphor to suggest that excessive erudition can imprison the mind.

Book Three begins with a lyric which, in earlier drafts, appeared buried in the middle of the book, a lyric written while Williams recovered from his heart attack in 1948, a lyric related to the cost a man must pay for his artistic career. Williams was particularly aware of the cost of his own art in 1948. His heart attack had been brought about in part from overwork, for despite being the author of sixteen books at age sixty-five, he still needed to practice medicine to make a living. Both poor health and financial obligations prevented him from taking the post of consultant to the Library of Congress which was offered him in 1948. Undoubtedly, Williams could personally identify with his cost theme. The cost of a writing career, however, had also been a theme in Pound's essays and poetry during his entire career. Not only had Pound written about the economic injustices which prevented a writer from exclusively following his trade, but his own life had been an illustration of his costly dedication to art and literature. Early in his career, he had dipped into his own meager income and had encouraged others to financially support new young artists. Throughout his career, he had often overworked and written in greater haste than he would have liked simply to earn a living.
Frequently, he had complained about the poverty an artist must endure and this theme was part of the attack on money interests which permeated The Cantos. More recently, the psychological cost which he had paid by being imprisoned as a traitor was far greater than any financial burden. When Williams moved the lyric on cost to the beginning of the first section of Book Three, he had good reason to relate the cost theme to Pound as well as to himself.

The opening lyric on cost features a question and an answer. "How much does it cost/ to love the locust tree/ in bloom?" asks the first stanza. "A fortune bigger than/ Avery could muster," replies the second. Williams probably selected the locust tree to represent both his own early experiments with the poetic line and a fondness for imagery drawn from nature. He had published two versions of "The Locust Tree in Flower," both experiments with lines of single words or single accents, both brief lyrics celebrating the arrival of spring. The locust tree may also represent a new element of nature imagery which entered Pound's Cantos as he served his time at the DTC. The reference to Avery also suggests a theme from Pound's early essays. Samuel Putnam Avery had amassed a fortune by collecting rare paintings and etchings and advising other Americans to purchase similar items from the galeries of Europe. Pound had long complained that art dealers make money on work produced by the artists while they are poor but sold by dealers after the artists are dead. Avery's fortune
implies profit on the work of artists who may have died in poverty, but a fortune bigger than Avery's suggests a cost beyond money, a psychological cost. For a writer, part of that cost may be the loss of his own creative talent when he finds himself trapped in erudition because he has sought inspiration in writing of the past. During the opening section of Faitoute's visit to the library, Williams calls works of the past "dead men's dreams" and compares these dreams to trapped birds.

Flown in from before the cold or nightbound (the light attracted them)
they sought safety (in books)
but ended battering against glass
at the high windows

The library is desolation, it has a smell of its own of stagnation and death. (100)

The image of trapped birds serves a double-purpose. In association with earlier lines, it suggests those dreams writers have embodied in books that are confined within a library's walls. But the image also suggests writers who have sought the library attracted by the hope of an illuminating knowledge and have instead found themselves confined among books containing other men's dreams and unable to return to life where they must find their own dreams. The passage continues with a direct reference to the cost of such erudition.

Beautiful Thing!

---the cost of dreams.

in which we search, after a surgery
of the wits and must translate, quickly
step by step or be destroyed—under a spell
to remain a castrate (a slowly descending veil
closing about the mind
cutting the mind away

SILENCE! (101)

If one does not translate the works he finds in the library into a new and living language, he will be trapped, his talent castrated and his mind destroyed. The final cost of searching for "Beautiful Thing" in the library may be SILENCE, not only silence requested on the usual library placard but also the silence which results when a writer's passions can no longer be communicated to the world at large. Pound had saved himself by translating to a new idiom much of what he found in older literary forms. Thus, despite the many aspects of his work which are dead or deadening to the reader, he had escaped certain death by experimenting with new language rhythms. Others will not be able to escape for long the silence which Pound has escaped, for their approaches to literature have been more traditional.

The emphasis on silence is picked up later in an updated version of the riddle Williams had once considered using in Book Two. In Book Three, however, the riddle which had been chiefly satiric becomes an answer for the overall question of Book Three: Where can one find a voice for the present moment, a marriage to language that will make deathless song? The riddle becomes a marriage riddle which incorporates both a song Williams wrote for a friend dying of cancer and the riddle he had once planned as part
of Book Two. The riddle leads to Williams' central assertion that language must be the poet's chief concern. In its final version, the riddle is introduced in relation to Pound's ability to use language successfully even while his life had actually been threatened.

Indifferent, the indifference of certain death
or incident upon certain death
propounds a riddle (in the Joyceian mode--
or otherwise,
it is indifferent which)
A marriage riddle: (105)

In this passage, "propounds" is a pun, for in addition to meaning proposes, it also identifies the passage and the riddle as pro-Pound. "Indifference of certain death" refers to Patch's indifference in Book One but may also refer to the indifference to death Pound demonstrated as he composed The Pisan Cantos at the DTC and can surely be expanded to any person's ability to substitute a consuming passion for the fear of death. This introduction is separated from the riddle itself by material which relates the riddle to the love and marriage theme of earlier books and to the Beautiful Thing Faitoute seeks in Book Three. Thus, the riddle becomes part of Williams' insistence that only by marriage to his own language can the twentieth century American poet hope to communicate with his people. The riddle finally appears as an answer to the question which precedes it.

What language could allay our thirsts,
what winds lift us, what floods bear us
past defects
but song but deathless song?

The rock
married to the river
makes
no sound

and the river
passess—but I remain
clamant
calling out ceaselessly
to the birds
and clouds

(listening)

Who am I?

—the voice! (107)

Given the literary satire both in Book Three and throughout Paterson, "the rock" probably refers to Eliot's poetry and "the river" to Crane's poetry though they may also imply religion married to life or sterility married to regeneration or all three marriages. Significantly, the marriage results in "no sound/ And the river/ passes." The marriage doesn't produce new poetry. "The voice," however, is the voice of the falls, a voice Sam Patch successfully leaped over before he plunged to his death in a foreign stream of language, a voice which enticed Sarah Cumming to her death. The voice is an indigenous American language which Pound had frequently captured in The Cantos despite the excessive erudition and economic propaganda which often obscured or muffled the voice. The voice is a voice Paterson must isolate and analyze.
After the riddle, Faitoute muses on the task of separating "the voice" from the many other elements which crowd Pound's work and other modern poetry.

--the voice rises, neglected
(with its new) the unfaltering
language. Is there no release?

Give it up. Quit it. Stop writing.
"Saintlike" you will never
separate that stain of sense,

an offense
to love, the mind's worm eating
out the core, unappeased

--never separate that stain
of sense from the inert mass. Never.
Never that radiance

quartered apart,
unapproached by symbols . (108)

The release Faitoute seeks in the library is a release of the language from poetry such as Pound's *Cantos* and other erudite literature. Faitoute seeks to separate the "stain of sense" but also realizes that his very attempt might be "an offence/ to love." He wonders whether such a search can ever be successful, whether it is possible to separate out such a "radiance," a radiance almost impossible to find in poems like *Four Quartets*, poems so heavily dependent on symbols. When Faitoute urges himself to "Quit it. Stop writing," Williams chooses terms which echo the sarcastic advice Pound gave himself in his own satirical poem *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*: "And give up verse, my boy/
There's nothing in it." Williams continues the echo which now refers not to a financial cost for Pound but to a
psychological cost for himself, the old fear that he
already has been excluded from the cult of erudite poets.

Give up
the poem. Give up the shilly-
shally of art.
What can you, what
can YOU hope to conclude--
on a heap of dirty linen?

--you
a poet (ridded) from Paradise? (108)

In an earlier version of this passage, the last two stanzas
had contained a clearer indictment of the erudite poets.  

Give up
the poem. Give up the shilly-
shally of art. Others

have superceded you.
They have concocted an order
(loveless) that is exclusive

(of you) what can you, what
can YOU hope to include?

Williams may well have changed the passage after he
had included "Oh Paradiso" as Faitoute's ironic comment on
the flood of erudition which overwhelms his mind in the
final section of Book Three. The reference to Dante's com-
edy was the single link which could relate The Cantos to
erudition in the same way Williams was relating The Bridge
and Four Quartets to erudition. The idea may, in fact,
have grown from a review of The Cantos written by Louis
Martz at the same time he reviewed Williams' second book of
Paterson. In this review Martz speculated on the rela-
tionship of Pound's Cantos to Dante's Comedia. He also
pointed out that Williams "has no interest in seeing life
through books, after Pound's fashion." To be "ridded from Paradise" was Williams' ironic way of asserting his exclusion from the cult of erudition, an exclusion for which he was now receiving praise in the formidable Yale Review.

Since critics had begun to praise Williams for his differences from Pound, a reaffirmation of his sonship to Pound could carry Faitoute to the same death Patch had faced. If Williams, after all, was unable to discover and delineate the "radiant gist" in Pound's poetry, he, too, might be leaping to his death in the stream of language. The cyclone which traps Faitoute in the library could indeed be dangerous. The first section of Book Three closes with a return to the early sketch of Patch as Faitoute recalls Patch preparing to dive over the falls, a plunge Faitoute himself is now risking by his venture into the library:

and the poor cotton-spinner, over the roofs, preparing to dive
looks down
Searching among books; the mind elsewhere
looking down

Seeking. (112)

Though Williams dissociates himself from Pound's excessive erudition in Book Three and clearly associates himself with the living aspects of the American language and his own world, he also recognizes the powerful influence Pound has wielded in modern poetry. Pound can no longer be viewed as the braggart who jumped to his death in the stream of language. Williams updates his portrait of
Pound and his demise in a series of four historical accounts about Indians. Williams had planned to use some Indian references from the time he compiled Book One, but he may have thought of them more as counters to Crane than in relation to Pound. In Book One, Williams had included the single exclamation "Indians!" (19) as part of Paterson's disjointed meditations. In Book Two, the reference is expanded when Faitoute sees "a line of Indian alders" while he walks up the mountain. His thoughts immediately shift to the standard romantic concepts of American Indians attacking unwary colonists.

"... they (the Indians) would weave in and out, unseen, among them along the stream come out whooping between the log house and men working the field, cut them off! they having left their arms in the blockhouse, and—without defense—carry them away into captivity. One old man..."

"Forget it! for God's sake, Cut out that stuff..." (52)

Faitoute's self-warning to "Cut out that stuff" suggests that Williams was unwilling to use the traditional Indian material presented in many American schoolbooks. Rather, he would treat his Indians realistically and had begun collecting accounts which stressed the humanity of the Indians and the rituals of their civilization, possibly as a way of countering Crane's romantic mythologizing of Indians in The Bridge. After reading The Pisan Cantos, Williams seems to have seen still another dimension for some of his Indian material, for he carefully assembled a
series of prose fragments and added touches of his own to present a more sympathetic dimension to the portrait of Pound he was rolling up in *Paterson*.

Pound frequently had called his long poem "the tale of the tribe," and this term appears in some reviews of *The Pisan Cantos*. Furthermore, at Pisa, Pound himself had lived under primitive conditions. Many of Pound's hardships and personal experiences which became part of *The Pisan Cantos* were described in an essay by one of the guards who had served at the DTC while Pound was imprisoned. Published in *Poetry* in January of 1949 when Williams was working avidly on Book Three, "The Background of the Pisan Cantos" reveals both the primitive living conditions and the horrors which Pound endured during his time at the DTC. In the essay and in *The Pisan Cantos*, Pound becomes a major character in "the tale of the tribe."

When Williams assembled his passages on Indian rituals in Book Three, he featured useless violence in one and placed it in the first section, the section which stresses cost. In another, he featured a sacrifice to the spirit of fire which is simultaneously a sacrifice to the fire in books and placed it in the fire section. In the third and fourth segments, he depicted the burial of a dead chieftain and a ritual for extracting the spirit of fertility from the body of a dead African warrior and included these in the flood section. The varied rituals have parallels to Pound's situation at the DTC, to various passages in
The Pisan Cantos and to Patch, the earliest prototype of Pound in Paterson.

The first Indian passage in Book Three recounts the false accusation, mutilation and eventual death of two Indian braves. Before they die, both braves attempt to perform the Kinte Kaye, a ritual dance, much to the amusement of the white men responsible for their torture. Williams may well have intended his depiction of senseless brutality by early American soldiers to suggest similar events which Pound had observed during his days of imprisonment in the closing months of World War II. At the DTC, Pound had firsthand knowledge of the cruelties a contemporary soldier could perpetrate. He knew of the "supposedly secret clubbings of recalcitrant prisoners." During his early days at the camp, he himself had been imprisoned in a "gorilla cage" of heavy grillwork surrounding a concrete floor. At that time, he had also observed the violent reaction to a prison escape attempt. Eight men from the Special Company made up of mental cases were mowed down by guards with Browning Automatic Rifles. The slaughter took place just a short distance from Pound's cage.

Pound responded to the brutality around him in The Pisan Cantos, but he often tempered his response with observations of nature, memories of the books he loved or references to the humanity prisoners showed each other. The guards with Browning Automatic Rifles and their corner stations appear in several passages of The Pisan Cantos as
"four giants in four corners." In one passage, they are contrasted to a dance of renewal performed by two larks, a struggle for life in the face of death.

4 times was the city rebuilted, Hooo Fasa
Gassir, Hooo Fasa dell' Italia tradita
now in the mind indestructible, Gassir, Hooo Fasa,
With the four giants at the four corners
and a terrace the colour of stars
pale as the dawn cloud, la luna
thin as Demeter's hair
Hooo Fasa, and in a dance the renewal
with two larks in contrapunto
at sunset

Pound's ability to write of a dance of renewal even as he lived in fear under the guard roosts symbolic of camp cruelty and man's inhumanity to man may have reminded Williams of the Kinte Kaye, the dance of renewal in the face of death that appeared in his own Indian material. Almost certainly, however, Pound's passage reminded Williams also of Pound's erudition and his ability to weave together his vast knowledge of literature and language with his immediate surroundings. These were talents Williams simultaneously poked fun at and respected in the second of his Indian passages.

Among accounts of Indians related to the Paterson area, Williams had several pages of information about early Indian fire sacrifices. He carefully edited this material and added a few touches of his own to identify Pound as a sacrificer to the fire and to interpret the fire ceremony as a book-worshipping ritual. Williams added to his source material his own description of the sacrificer as "He-Who-
During much of his time at the DTC, Pound was permitted to live in "his own pyrimidal tent," the tent with a smoke hole which prompted several passages in *The Pisan Cantos*. In one passage, Pound refers to Aphrodite in the guise of a butterfly which flies in and out the "smoke hole" of his tent, and in another passage, he views the star Arcturus as it passes over his "smoke hole." "He-Who-Lies-With-His-Eyes-Bulging-In-The—Smoke-Hole" is undoubtedly Pound, probably Pound as he worked daily with his volume of Confucius and Chinese Dictionary, two books which sustained him during his internment at the DTC.

Though much of the information regarding the Indian fire sacrifice is quoted verbatim from his source, Williams carefully selected paragraphs which would do more than depict an Indian propitiating the spirit of fire. He included both a Latin passage and its English translation which can be applied to Pound.

Ex qua re, quia sicubi fumus ascendit in altum; ita sacrificulus, duplicata altiori voce, Kanaka, kanaka! vel aliquando Hoo, Hoo! faciem versus orientem convertit.

Whereupon as the smoke ascends on high, the sacrificer crying with a loud voice, Kanaka, Kanaka! or sometimes Hoo, Hoo! turns his face towards the east. (114)

The mixture of Latin, Indian and English must have appealed to Williams as a way to parody Pound's excessive uses of foreign language. "Hoo Hoo" echoes Pound's "Hooo Fasa" and when the sacrificer "turns his face to the east," Williams suggests Pound's translations from Confucius made
during his imprisonment and his inclusion of many Chinese characters in *The Pisan Cantos*. In Canto 77, Pound provides an explication for one particular point of wisdom he also presents in Chinese characters: "to sacrifice to a spirit not one's own is flattery (sycophancy)." Williams adapts Pound's concept of flattery to an ironic portrait of Pound flattering the spirit of fire in books.

In a poetic passage which follows the prose, however, Williams also celebrates Pound's worship of books. Readers like Pound seek that fire which originally created the book, "warping the sense to detect the norm, to break/through the shell of custom" (115). Though Williams goes on to call old books "men in hell,/ their return over the living ended," he also reveals a personal premise that fits both *The Pisan Cantos* and *Paterson*, for the books reveal the men:

> Clearly, they say. Oh clearly! Clearly?
> What more clear than that of all things
> nothing is so unclear, between man and
> his writing, as to which is the man and
> which the thing and of them both which
> is the more to be valued (116)

Despite his earliest satiric thrusts at Pound and the humor with which he treats Pound's erudition in Book Three, Williams' final evaluation of Pound deals with both the man and his writing, an inextricable mixture. Williams' final comment on Pound is a remainder of his importance as the leader of a revolution in language. The third Indian segment occurs in the flood section of Book Three and relates
the burial of a "dead chieftain" (132), words added by Williams to his historic source. Williams also added "a man of gigantic stature," words which recall "the large rugged stature of Sam Patch" from Book One. Finally, Williams added a passage to the Indian story about the dead chieftain's "favorite dog, a much loved animal" which is brought forth, killed, and buried with the chief. Williams' additions leave little doubt that Pound is the chieftain and *The Cantos* are the dog that is buried with him.

In the final passage related to Pound, Williams departed from his source material on American Indians to relate the ceremony performed when an African Ibibio man is slain in battle. Williams appears to have included this particular passage primarily to suggest that Pound's work will fertilize future writers. In the passage, the wives of dead warriors extract the spirit of fertility from their husbands' dead bodies in a secret ceremony. "On the guarding of this secret" depends "the strength of the tribe" (143). A poetic passage which follows suggests that such fertility in writing might take "a hundred years" or "perhaps/ two lifetimes/ Sometimes it takes longer" (144). By 1949, Williams was not at all sure how soon Pound's influence would be felt among the majority of new young poets.

The Indian chieftain's burial appears in the middle of a mock poetic elegy to a dead dog, a dog related to the one
buried with Pound but also to the dogs which have represented poems by Eliot. The dog has bitten Faitoute three times and has been killed as a result of Faitoute's report of the bitings. The dead dog floats "downstream/ on the swift current" in "a formal progression" (131) as he "descends toward Acheron" (132), one of the rivers of Hell in Dante's Divine Comedy. At one point in the elegy, a line is repeated from the Book One parody of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." "Come yeah, Chi Chi" (132) is a repeat of "Come YEAH, Chichi" (28), the dog call which interrupts Williams' portrayal of the woman betrayed into pregnancy by a more potent Prufrock. In Book Three, the dead dog appears to be a composite of all the doggy poems in Paterson, poems overly formal, poems leashed to old traditions and poems overly erudite, poems killed by Faitoute's report, thus killed by parody, ridicule, and satire in Paterson. By describing the dog's descent to Hell, Williams manages to stress the erudition which all of Book Three attacks. The mock elegy begins as part of the flood of erudition:

The sullen, leaden flood, the silken flood
--to the teeth
  to the very eyes

"To the teeth/ to the very eyes" is repeated as a refrain both after the dog descends to Hell and when the flood through Faitoute's mind is over. At this point, the refrain falters, the flood concludes, the the elegy becomes a line from Gray's famous "Elegy in a Country Churchyard:"
Like all things which have "lost their form" in the flood, the line from Gray's Elegy has been broken from its original iambic pentameter into different rhythmic units. This, however, is not fertility but only the destruction that precedes fertility, the destruction of traditional lines and rhythms which must occur along with the destruction of traditional poetic genres like the elegy before new poetic forms can be found. Just as the mock elegy becomes "a sort of praise, a/ peace that comes of destruction" (132), the entire book becomes a celebration of destruction in preparation for a new fertility, a preparation for the next book which will celebrate discovery. Allegorically, pompous erudition and mystical symbolism are destroyed by laughter while language and literature drawn from life are celebrated. The library becomes a prison, but the mind escapes its prison to recognize beauty in a bedraggled black servant girl who represents a violated land and language which have more spirit than the dead language in books of the past.

Book Three differs from Books One and Two because the literary allegory and the language theme become a unity. Ridicule, parody, and satire permeate far more passages
than they had in the earlier two books, yet they are interwoven with direct commentary on Williams' poetic peeves and a definite softening of his attitude toward Pound. The book appears to veer off from the original myth which critics had so much appreciated in Books One and Two. Unless it is read as allegory, the book appears fragmented, a departure from the mythical giant and his mountain woman who seemed to unify the first two books. Although a few reviewers of Book Three continued to praise Paterson, others recognized the antiacademic thrust and branded the books as inferior to the earlier two. Still others waited for the last book before passing final judgment.  

By Book Three, Williams could be fairly certain critics would not look for satiric thrusts in his poem. He indicates as much in a brief passage near the close of the book:

Let's give the canary to that old deaf woman; when he opens his bill, to hiss at her, she'll think he is singing. (143)

The canary's bill must certainly be Bill Williams who is hissing at deaf critics, critics who had been willing to explicate every allusion of Eliot's poems and every metaphor of Crane's work but who were unable to hear the hissing of a satiric undercurrent in Paterson.

By 1949, Williams could laugh at his critics and at himself as well, but he may have felt somewhat shamed by his earlier laughs at Pound. Like many others, he was
forgetting Pound's treason to his country and remembering Pound's gift to other poets of a new way to use language. Each time Williams visited Pound at St. Elizabeth's, Pound welcomed Williams warmly, and once again, as in the old days, Williams succumbed to Pound's dynamic personality. When Book Three appeared, Williams included a note dated September 1949 on the book jacket. The note is puzzling, for it implies that Paterson may be Patch and that Mrs. Cumming may be either woman or man. Apparently, Williams wanted to set the record straight on some of his satire and also confuse readers about anything that might injure Pound. Williams may have decided by then not to bring his portrait of E. E. Cummings to any obvious conclusion in Book Four and probably had decided to leave no possibility of an accidental discovery that Patch resembled Pound, the old friend Williams had lost and once again found.

Williams had committed himself to an allegory laced with satire, a proclamation of the local threaded with parodies of work other poets had done, a statement of his own poetics with a laugh at the outdated poetics of writers who clung to the past, but he had also decided to honor his old friend Pound. Book Three had the same comic elements as earlier books, but its author had begun to change. In the very years he had been composing, Williams had taken his place among the literary giants and was beginning to look with kinder eyes at some of his compatriots.
NOTES

CHAPTER VI

1 SUNY manuscript D7. Red paperbound notebook Williams used in the hospital during the last week of Feb. 1948. The notebook contains some first drafts, notes and plans for Paterson Three and Four, plans for "The Poem as a Field of Action" and early notes for the Autobiography.

2 SUNY manuscript C108. Seven drafts for "The Poem as a Field of Action."

3 Williams, Selected Essays, pp. 280-291.

4 SUNY manuscript E18.

5 Sankey, p. 117.

6 Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950, p. 120.


13 Crane, pp. 94-95.


15 SUNY manuscript C108.

Beautiful thing
you are the torment of the mind
--your body that should kiss the
starved mind--forbidden to the
drunkenness

beautiful thing
which is the perfection of your
emergence into the air -- thwarted
beaten to inability -- to be old to
be dragged into -- to be ignored
all beauty
akin to poetry, you are poetry
and the famous lines of all the great
have been woven to make you and to
make you brown, to make you gracious
to make you drunk, to make you
beautiful thing
a beater of dirty rugs -- flabby and
white and a slug

22 SUNY manuscripts E28 and E29.
23 Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Oct. 11, 1948.
25 Weaver, p. 290, identifies Avery but does not associate Avery with Pound.
27 Yale manuscript: Book III, Section 1.
Paterson is a man (since I am a man) who dives from cliffs and the edges of waterfalls, to his death—finally. But for all that he is a woman (since I am not a woman) who is the cliff and the waterfall. She spreads protecting fingers about him as he plummets to his conclusions to keep the winds from blowing him out of his path. But he escapes, in the end, as I have said.

As he dies the rocks fission gradually into wild flowers the better to voice their sorrow, a language that would have liberated them both from their distresses had they but known it in time to prevent catastrophe.

The brunt of the four books of Paterson (of which this is the third, "The Library") is a search for the redeeming language by which a man's premature death, like the death of Mrs. Cumming in Book I and the woman's (the man's) failure to hold him (her) might have been prevented.
Book IV will show the perverse confusions that come of a failure to untangle the language and make it our own as both man and woman are carried helplessly toward the sea (of blood) which, by their failure of speech, awaits them. The poet alone in this world holds the key to their final rescue.

—William Carlos Williams
September 28, 1949
CHAPTER VII

LAST ENCOUNTERS WITH THE GIANTS

By the time Williams began intensive work on Book Four, he was a successful author concluding a poem eagerly awaited by a host of critics, preparing an autobiography for a new publisher, negotiating for new books and reprintings of past ones. His literary position was higher than it had ever been, and his reputation did not depend primarily on the fourth book of Paterson. Much of the fourth book had been tentatively planned, and Williams believed he could continue the subtle satiric strategies he had employed in earlier books even as he concluded his literary autobiography. He had the necessary materials, manuscripts and ideas; it remained only for him to determine the final perspective he would take toward those compatriots who had so much influenced and infiltrated the substrata of his literary life and his long poem. Now, however, as a celebrated writer, Williams was not so angry as he had once been. He had made his peace with Pound, was beginning to feel compassion for Crane and was almost oblivious to Cummings. Only Eliot remained the real enemy.

Through the late forties, Eliot had enjoyed a reputation on both sides of the Atlantic as a major playwright, the twentieth century writer who had successfully returned
poetry to the theater. Williams, too, had begun writing plays but with far less success than his competitor in England. Williams' prose drama, A Dream of Love, closed after running only a few nights in the fall of 1949; in contrast, Eliot's new play, The Cocktail Party, opened with great success in New York in January of 1950 and ran for several hundred performances. Williams had begun a mock drama which satirized the religious elements in Eliot's plays way back in the early forties when Eliot's plays still contained a good deal of preaching and more formalized poetry. Eliot's new success with a drawing room comedy composed in blank verse almost indistinguishable from prose may partially account for the numerous changes Williams made in the manuscripts which became the opening section of Book Four.

Given the parody, allegory, and satiric thrusts at Eliot throughout Paterson and the close association between Eliot and Crane Williams had established in Book Three, it is no surprise that he expanded his link between the two poets in Book Four. Considering the mock myth in Books One and Two, the mock prayer in Book Two and the mock elegy in Book Three, it is no surprise that Williams included a mock idyl in Book Four. But critics had noticed only a few of Williams' many allusions to Eliot and his work and none to Crane. They had viewed the mock myth as real myth and expected an epic rather than a comedy. Thus, most were
surprised, shocked or dismayed by the first section of Williams' final book.

Though critics had missed much of the comedy directed against Eliot that might have prepared them for the opening of Book Four, they had noted in Paterson both similarities to and differences from Pound's Cantos. They had not, however, seen the full portrait of Pound which Williams had first intended nor recognized the shift in attitude toward Pound that had occurred in Book Three. When Williams devoted a large part of Book Four's second section to a celebration of social credit, some readers saw it only as an attempt to support an old friend's monetary theories, a weakness, rather than the continuation of a dialogue with Pound that had been carried on throughout the poem.

Finally, critics expected Williams to make final statements on his language and historic themes and to conclude the story of his hero Paterson with a suitable epic flourish. Instead, in his second and third sections, Williams unostentatiously turned the search for a new language and a local culture over to Allen Ginsberg, the representative of a new generation of poets. In the third section, he also continued to insert seemingly unrelated excerpts of historic prose and added a long nostalgic, free-verse account of early life in Paterson, both without any integrating or obvious historic purpose. As to Paterson, Williams allowed his hero brief appearances in the opening dramatic section, never clearly distinguished
Paterson from himself in the second section, and introduced him as a sleeping old man as the final section began. After neglecting the hero for a perplexing personal dialogue and a seemingly irrelevant string of recollections in the third section, Williams insisted on a startling and comic sea-rescue, more suitable to farce than epic, and closed, not with the hero's rescue, but with one last historic fragment and five short, strangely flippant lines of poetry.

It is little wonder that Book Four provoked the critics to confusion, condescension, or pleas for time to probe the poem's density and vitality. Writers like Hayden Carruth and Hugh Kenner, who were sympathetic to the poem, suggested that greater study and newer critical tools would uncover meanings and purposes still hidden. Other critics were far less appreciative and some were absolutely hostile like Joseph Bennet who claimed the entire poem had neither beginning nor end, that "any part of Paterson can be taken out and put elsewhere in the poem." Even Randall Jarrell, who had hailed the first book as the beginning of an unparalleled American long poem, admitted to gradual disappointment with successive books and could not even bring himself to carefully review Book Four, which he felt would not "satisfactorily conclude even a quite mediocre poem."

Excessive critical expectations had at last clashed head-on with Williams' hopes for his Chaucerian comedy. Most
critics had let their own traditional expectations blind them to Williams' real purposes in the poem.

Williams' task of pulling together the many threads of *Paterson* in a final book was prodigious, particularly since much of his earlier satiric sallies had gone unnoticed and his new material had neither a unified setting like the first three books nor a unified theme like Book Three. In the argument for his poem which had appeared with Book One, Williams had promised that Book Four would be "reminiscent of episodes, all that any one man may achieve in a lifetime." Such a promise along with the knowledge that *Paterson* was indeed a larger-than-life-sized portrayal of Williams could give the book a tenuous unity, yet Williams had not clearly identified his hero with himself, and his readers had not seen the larger literary allegory which accompanied autobiographical elements. Still, a work that had begun with literary allegory as a strong satiric undercurrent and had brought that allegory into the foreground in the third book could hardly conclude without careful attention to the literary giants who had been portrayed surreptitiously throughout the poem. Though many critics still consider Book Four the most disorganized and poorly integrated of the four books, it is partly because they miss the allegorical and satiric level. By 1950, however, Williams knew both how his Chaucerian comedy had to end and how it could not end despite expectations from the critics. He did not ponder the poem's conclusion as he had pondered
over Book Two. Instead, he attempted to conclude the poem he had originally planned but also to make token gestures toward the few critical expectations which could be satisfied and to wind up his satiric portraits in keeping with his changed literary perspectives. By attempting to do so much, he produced the least coherent and most puzzling of his four books, and he produced it in an amazingly short period. The final book emerged from a mass of manuscripts Williams worked on intensively from January to mid-October, less than ten months, the shortest time span he had spent preparing any of the four books for publication.\(^4\)

In the first section of Book Four, Williams creates a mock idyl suggestive of a drawing room comedy, another parody of poetic traditions derived from Europe and no longer useful to the modern world. Rather than depict the rustic life of a shepherd and shepherdess, Williams features an aging lesbian poetess and her young nurse. Corydon, the lesbian, lives in New York City and develops a fondness for Phyllis, the nurse from a small town who trained in Paterson and has run off to the city. Phyllis does not return Corydon's affection; she cares more for Paterson, the married man who wants to become her lover. The action shifts back and forth in a series of dialogues between Phyllis and Corydon or between Phyllis and Paterson occasionally interrupted by letters from Phyllis to her alcoholic father.
Literal, the dramatic idyl provides an opportunity to present Corydon's poems, a pastiche of elements derived from modern poetry and European traditions, and Phyllis's letters, a composite of American slang, colloquialisms, misspellings and poor grammar. The poems, along with Corydon's conversation, reveal her as a well-educated but disillusioned and lonely woman who tries desperately to impress Phyllis and win her love. Phyllis, however, cannot be won over by poetry, by Corydon's old world sophistication or by her compliments. Though Corydon tries, the two never communicate, and Phyllis retains a sarcastic attitude toward Corydon's advances throughout the Idyl. In contrast, Phyllis and Paterson do communicate verbally and physically, though Phyllis will not go so far as to part with her virginity. Corydon fails especially on the level of language, for she bores Phyllis with her poetic observations of New York and her disparate derivative poetry. In contrast, Phyllis sees their surroundings exactly as they are and describes them in her own colorful, colloquial language.

Allegorically, Corydon, like Hart Crane, attempts to write an American poem while under the influence of Pound and Eliot in their early years when both poets placed heavy emphasis on European tradition. Several pages of the section are devoted to a long poem Corydon writes for Phyllis, a poem strangely akin to The Bridge with echoes of Pound and Eliot. Although Corydon's poem is set in New York City
as is much of *The Bridge*, it is entitled "Corydon, a Pasto­
ral," a title suggesting elements of autobiography and
highlighting the irony of an idyllic poem set in a modern
city. Not only does Corydon's poem illustrate that pasto­
ral poetry is no longer possible in a twentieth century
American metropolis, but it also implies Crane's failure to
adapt a romantic primitive past to a technological present
in *The Bridge*.

Corydon's poem begins with references to the gulls
which become a recurring image in her pastoral just as they
are a recurring image in the first three poems of *The
Bridge*. Crane had first used the slow movement of "the
seagull's wings" at dawn and the arc of the gull's flight
to suggest both the mystery and the shape of Brooklyn
Bridge. 5 He had followed up the image in his second poem
with a reference by Columbus to "the Great White Birds,"
and in his third poem with the "cold gulls" as harbingers
of another dawn in Brooklyn. 6 Williams' choice of gulls as
a unifying image in Corydon's poem is deliberate. Crane
had used Williams' chapter on Columbus from *In the American
Grain* as a source for his own poem on Columbus. He had
adapted to his own poetic purposes the "white bird like a
gull" which appears in Williams' account. 7 In the first
three poems of *The Bridge*, gulls are images of beauty, mys­
stery and spirit, qualities Crane also attributed to the
magnificent Brooklyn Bridge, the engineering miracle he
chose as a major symbol for his poem. In Corydon's poem,
the gulls compete with a helicopter which, like the gulls, searches for a corpse:

... This is what I've been leading up to. It's called, Corydon, a Pastoral. We'll skip the first part, about the rocks and sheep, begin with the helicopter. You remember that?

. . . drives the gulls up in a cloud
Um . no more woods and fields. Therefore present, forever present

. a whirring pterodactyl
of a contrivance, to remind one of Da Vinci, searches the Hellgate current for some corpse, lest the gulls feed on it and its identity and its sex, as its hopes, and its despairs and its moles and its marks and its teeth and its nails be no longer decipherable and so lost .

therefore present, forever present .

The gulls, vortices of despair, circle and give voice to their wild responses until the thing is gone . then, ravening, having scattered to survive, close again upon the focus, the bare stones, three harbor stones, except for that . useless

unprofaned . (161)

The helicopter image pokes fun at Crane's early attempt to reconcile nature and the modern mechanical world while the "whirring pterodactyl of a contrivance" parodies Crane's exaggerated metaphors for the airplane. Corydon's poem, however, is not simply a parody of Crane and his influences, for the corpse which could lose its identity to predatory gulls is the corpse of a suicide, a reminder both of the "bedlamite" in the opening poem of The Bridge and of Crane himself who had leaped from an ocean liner to his own sea death in 1932. The reader knows Corydon's corpse is a suicide, for Phyllis, in an earlier letter to her father,
has written the real facts behind the poetic passage as well as her own attitude toward the lesbian poetess.

But she's a nut, of the worst kind. Today she was telling about some rocks in the river here she calls her three sheep. If they're sheep I'm the Queen of England. They're white all right but it's from the gulls that crap them up all day long.

You ought to see this place.

There was a helicopter (?) flying all over the river today looking for the body of a suicide, some student, some girl about my age (she says a Hindu Princess). It was in the papers this morning but I didn't take notice. You ought to have seen the way those gulls were winging it around. They went crazy.

By comparing Phyllis's letter to Corydon's poem, the reader knows that Corydon has turned several natural elements and real events into allusive metaphor and has combined them with a pseudo philosophy. Thus, Corydon's poem is an expansion of elements taken from Crane into a quasi-philosophical poem similar to Eliot's later poems.

Corydon's refrain, "Therefore present, forever present" is meaningless in the context of her poem but does imitate Eliot's concern with time and eternity in *Four Quartets* particularly as expressed in the opening and closing lines of the first section of "Burnt Norton:"

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.

... ... ... ...

Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Eliot's philosophical concern for time persists throughout the remaining movements of "Burnt Norton," just as Corydon's quasi-philosophical concern for time interrupts disparate but narrative material, material associated primarily with Crane but secondarily with Eliot. The combination of elements from Crane's and Eliot's poems is another way for Williams to stress similarities between the two poets and their uses of language. By developing Corydon as a character who is defeated by the very poet who inspires her, Williams expands on the association he had made between Eliot and Crane in Book Three. Both Eliot and Crane were unable to include the actual facts of life in their poems without allusions which turned them to either romantic or philosophical purposes. Even the unsophisticated Phyllis can sense the poor quality of Corydon's pastoral and comments, "It stinks."

Phyllis's terse criticism provokes Corydon to a brief defense of her poem:

If this were rhyme, Sweetheart
such rhyme as might be made
jaws would hang open .

But the measure of it is the thing . None
can wish for an embellishment
and keep his mind lean,
fit for action .
such action as I plan (161-162)

At this point, Pound's theories predominate. By 1950, Williams knew that Pound's early pronouncements against rhyme had influenced both Crane and Eliot as well as himself. Eliot had used rhyme sparingly ever since
The Waste Land and had clearly expressed the need for new approaches to language in Four Quartets. Publication of Crane's correspondence had shown his concern for finding new measures in the music of jazz to depict the modern world. Corydon, like Crane and Eliot, uses rhyme in some poems when she wants to, and though she eschews rhyme as an embellishment in her pastoral, like Crane, she still resorts to excessive metaphors and allusions which mar her poem even more than rhyme.

The next section of Corydon's pastoral again includes elements from The Bridge with echoes of Eliot's poems. When she resumes her reading, Corydon notes that she had left off "at the entrance to the 45th street tunnel," a suggestion that her poem will now reflect "The Tunnel," one of Crane's most successful sections of The Bridge and the one Eliot had published in The Criterion. Crane had considered this section an illustration of "the encroachment of machinery on humanity; a kind of purgatory. . ." By the time he was writing "The Tunnel," Crane had lost the early optimism toward American industry which had first prompted him to celebrate Brooklyn Bridge. He had come to grips with man's ability to use machinery for evil as well as for good and used the subway to express purgatorial darkness, a vision of man caught in his own mechanical jungle. With a combination of varied rhythms and occasional rhyme, Crane used bits of conversation, commentary and narration to vividly depict passengers traveling by subway
from Manhattan to Brooklyn by way of the East River tunnel. Like Crane's poem, Corydon's poem begins outside the tunnel, incorporates both commentary and urban imagery, and suggests a kind of purgatory or hell:

Condemned .
But who has been condemned . where the tunnel under the river starts? Voi ch'entrate revisited! Under ground, under rock, under river under gulls . under the insane .

. the traffic is engulfed and disappears .
to emerge . never

A voice calling in the hubbub (Why else are there newspapers, by the cart-load?) blaring the news not wit shall evade, no rhyme cover. Necessity gripping the words . scouting evasion, that love is begrimed, befouled . (164)

Corydon pauses at this point to assert, "I'd like to spill the truth, on that one," presumably her own personal feelings about begrimed love. When Phyllis asks her why she doesn't, Corydon scornfully answers, "This is a POEM." For Corydon, like Crane in The Bridge, a poem cannot admit personal feelings that are directly stated. They must be associated with the poem's symbolic purpose. They must also be clothed in metaphor if they are to be apprehended poetically, and Corydon's poem trails off into an elaboration of "begrimed love" which has suffered a "sea change!"

Not only does the sea change imply homosexual love which has replaced heterosexual love, but the implication is hidden in a sudden burst of unintelligible sea imagery which recalls Crane's cryptic sea imagery in other sections of The Bridge.
Unlike Crane, Corydon does not use the tunnel itself as an extended metaphor to depict the dehumanizing effects of a mechanical age. Rather, she uses an elevator as her metaphor of the mechanistic and materialistic world.

While in the tall buildings (sliding up and down) is where the money's made
up and down directed missiles in the greased shafts of the tall buildings. They stand torpid in cages, in violent motion unmoved but alert! predatory minds, un-
affected
UNINCONVENIENCED unsexed, up
and down (without wing motion) This is how the money's made. using such plugs.

At the sanitary lunch hour packed woman to woman (or man to woman, what's the difference?) the flesh of their faces gone to fat or gristle, without recognizable outline, fixed in rigors, adipose or sclerosis expressionless, facing one another, a mould for all faces (canned fish) this.

Move toward the back, please, and face the door!

is how the money's made,
money's made (165-166)

Like some sections of The Bridge, Corydon's poem suggests that urban workers have been stripped of their humanity. At least two of the rhythmic elements, however, echo Eliot's early work, a suggestion that Corydon's sophistication reflects Eliot's early dominance of the literary scene. "Move toward the back please, and face the door" echoes Eliot's famous pub closing from The Waste Land: "Hurry up please, it's time."12 "This is how the money's
made" echoes Eliot's nursery rhyme jingle at the end of "The Hollow Men:"

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper

Echoes from Eliot's pessimistic early poems are particularly relevant for a poem that suggests Crane's allegiance to and influence from Eliot. In his biography of Crane, Brom Weber presents Crane's suicide as a result of his growing disillusion with his world and with the early optimism of his own poem, The Bridge. Weber uses Crane's correspondence to show how The Bridge began when Crane had a deep faith in the spiritual potentiality in America and how this faith gradually diminished and died. He quotes a 1925 letter from Crane to Gorham Munson to show how Crane once considered his own poetry as a counterbalance to Eliot's early pessimism, the kind of pessimism expressed in "The Hollow Men."13 Weber also shows how Crane lost his early faith in America during the four years he worked on The Bridge and how he slipped into a series of gradually deepening depressions. Crane's poem had been subsidized by Otto Kahn, a wealthy banker who bought the idea of celebrating contemporary America rather than denigrating the crass materialism which pervaded America in the late twenties. Weber sees Crane as torn between his growing view of reality and the promise he had given Kahn of a poem which would transcend and idealize the modern world.
Weber summarizes Crane's descent from romantic optimism to deepening despair with a line Crane had composed in the summer of 1926 but corrected in the last month of 1929. Crane had changed the enthusiastic "and elevators heave us to our day" to the more desolate "till elevators drop us from our day." Williams not only expands the elevator image to a metaphor of dehumanization and materialism but also adds touches of Eliot's work which suggest that the pessimism of *The Waste Land* and "The Hollow Men" subtly invaded Crane's long poem. Although no longer disguised as Faitoute, Williams was continuing to demonstrate his ability to do what other poets had done. In Corydon's poem, he also implies that Eliot's early pessimistic poetry had contributed to Crane's destruction. Though Crane's poem "The Tunnel" pleased Eliot enough for publication in *The Criterion*, it also revealed the sense of disillusion that almost prevented Crane from finishing *The Bridge*. Though successful as a single poem, "The Tunnel" contributed to a growing disunity in *The Bridge* which prompted early critical disapproval, contributed to Crane's ongoing depression and, according to Weber, eventually contributed also to Crane's suicide.

Weber's sympathetic depiction of Crane's disintegrating faith in his country, his poem and himself may well have been partially responsible for Williams' more sympathetic portrayal of Crane in Book Four. Corydon's elevator sequence concludes with passengers reading in their
newspapers of the same corpse and gulls which had appeared earlier in the poem. By returning finally to the corpse of the suicide and the gulls, Williams brings Corydon's poem full circle, suggesting that the corpse is no less dehumanized than the living automatons in the elevator but also reemphasizing Corydon's depressing perspective. Corydon, too, is aware of the distressing mood of her pastoral and confesses to Phyllis, "Oh I could cry!/ Cry upon your young shoulder for what I know./ I feel so alone" (166). By this point, the reader sympathizes with Corydon.

Throughout her poem, Corydon several times uses sexual identity as a metaphor: first the corpse with gulls feeding on "its identity and its sex," then love which has become "a gelding," and finally the elevator passengers who are making money but are "unsexed." So much emphasis on sexual identity highlights Corydon's own sexual aberration and adds to the irony of Williams' Idyl. Corydon and Phyllis have no hope for blissful idyllic love or even for verbal communication; rather, Phyllis fails to relate to Corydon except to enjoy the privileges Corydon's wealth can offer. Even when Phyllis joins Corydon for a fishing trip on her yacht, the reader knows Phyllis will eventually leave Corydon to seek a fulfilling male. When Williams briefly summarized the purpose of his final book on his jacket for Book Three, he undoubtedly thought of Corydon's lesbianism as one of the "perverse confusions that come from a failure to untangle the language and make it our own." 15
More manuscripts exist for the first section of Book Four than for any other section of Paterson. Part of the reason for so many manuscripts may have been Williams' late decision to focus his satire primarily on Crane as influenced by Eliot rather than on Eliot alone or Eliot along with other European influences. Earliest manuscripts of the dialogues date back to the days when Book Two was being written. They contain far more religious references and do not include the mock pastoral which was at one time a separate manuscript. Williams evidently decided to combine the two manuscripts after he read Weber's biography of Crane. His notes and drafts dated January 1950 indicate not only when he began to combine the two manuscripts but also that Phyllis was at one time to be named Pat and that Williams was already thinking of Corydon as a man.

Part 1 - The young girl (Pat) and old woman (MAN) incident. Pat's letters to her Da to be in small type (?) The PASTORAL to be incorporated here.

In the final text, Corydon suggests to Phyllis, "Let's change names. You be Corydon! And I'll play Phyllis . . ." (158). In Williams' earlier draft, the passage had read, "I'll be Phyllis/ and you be . the man/ Corydon!" Williams probably eliminated the clue to Corydon's sex when he decided to make her more than a representative of Crane, for in the final version, Corydon becomes a compound figure who incorporates not only allusions to Crane, Pound and Eliot in her work but also echoes from early Yeats and at least one anti-Communist poem which
could suggest Cummings or any other politically oriented modern poet. Thus, though her longest poem parallels *The Bridge* and both her lesbianism and depression suggest Crane, she personifies the larger world of modern poets who included their cultural backgrounds, classical educations and political biases in their poems. Her poems are poor because they combine a complex of influences but nothing of her own style.

After Book Four was published, the first section caused problems for Williams. He wrote to Robert Lowell how "Marianne Moore went berserk over it" and defended his right to treat his lesbian as a "normal phenomenon." He confessed to Lowell, "I don't mind telling you that I started writing of her *[Corydon]* in a satiric mood—but she won me quite over. I ended by feeling admiration for her and real regret at her defeat."

In all probability, Williams began writing of Corydon when he still considered her in relation to his promise on the dust cover for Book Three. In his late 1949 synopsis of *Paterson*, Williams had predicted, "Book IV will show the perverse confusions that come of a failure to untangle the language and make it our own as both man and woman are carried helplessly toward the sea (of blood) which, by their failure of speech, awaits them." Even after he decided to associate Corydon predominantly with Crane, it seems likely that he thought of her as a satiric character something like Sam Patch or Sarah Cumming. As he developed her poem
and character in relation to Weber's biography of Crane, however, he became sympathetic to both Crane and Corydon. Corydon began to represent a world that had enticed Williams himself in his earlier days, a world he had finally rejected but which had engulfed Eliot, Pound, a host of other expatriates, and eventually Crane. For Williams, thus Paterson, the old culture which Corydon grew to represent, became a testing ground, and the lesbian upon whom she was partially based eventually became a sympathetic feminine version of Crane.  

After Marianne Moore's criticism of Part One, Williams wrote to her defending his lesbian poetess and pointing out her broad allegorical significance.

As far as the story goes, she represents the "great world" against the more or less primitive world of the provincial city. She is informed, no sluggard, uses her talents as she can. There has to be that world against which the other tests itself.

In a later letter to Moore, Williams again referred to the first section of Book Four and revealed that the earliest prototype for Corydon had indeed been a woman and a personal acquaintance.

I was looking for an image to typify the impact of "Paterson" in his young female phase with a world beyond his own, limited in the primitive, provincial environment. It was the 4th book, the end was approaching. I didn't want him to "disappear" before this fulfillment.

It happens that I knew in my personal experience of an instance which contained all the elements that I needed. A distinguished woman, a prominent figure in the New York and international world... existed in my consciousness. I had written the passage a long time before. It seemed to fit perfectly into the poem.
In writing out the passage, this woman, who was at first a mere symbol, came to life for herself and I forgave her. I even realized that she has as much reason for being as the cruder counterfoil that the young nurse provided. . .

According to this account, the lesbian was not originally associated with Crane. Furthermore, Williams claims that Phyllis represents an early version of Paterson in his young female phase, yet he also included in his Idyl another character named Paterson. This anomaly probably occurs, because Phyllis was not originally Paterson at all just as Corydon was not originally Crane. She was at first an unnamed character, a virgin who spoke colloquially, who spoke in a way similar to the lower class characters in Eliot's early poems and in his first religious drama, The Rock. In the earliest manuscripts, this virgin and Paterson are the only two speakers. She refers to another boyfriend, however, a boyfriend who lives in a church and who wants to sell the church property. Rocks which Corydon will later call sheep are described in these early drafts as "the bare stone trinity." The early manuscripts suggest competition between the religious boyfriend and Paterson for the young virgin's favors. The religious boyfriend almost certainly would have been Eliot, and the virgin appears to represent colloquial language which Williams felt he could use more effectively than Eliot. Williams may well have shifted his early satire on Eliot to emphasize Eliot's influence on Crane after he saw such an influence so dramatically asserted in Weber's
biography of Crane. The shift to a social comedy would also come closer to a parody of Eliot's more recent drama than of his earlier overtly religious drama.

Intermediary drafts suggest how the virgin of earlier manuscripts eventually turned to Pat and then to Phyllis, changes directly related to Corydon's entrance into the dialogues. When Corydon became part of the dialogues, the religious boyfriend disappeared and satiric references to Eliot were removed from the virgin's speeches. Echoes from Eliot's poetry were instead inserted into Corydon's conversation and poetry much like allusions to other modern poets. In 1950, however, Williams included the long pastoral which paralleled The Bridge as part of Corydon's poetry and began to stress her lesbianism, two changes which directly related her to the homosexual poet, Crane. He also renamed his virgin Pat, the first indication that she would serve as a young female Paterson. Only after he decided to retain Paterson, the married man, did he change the virgin's name to Phyllis.

The many shifts of characters and purposes in Part One make the section difficult for the reader to understand, and Williams' comments have done little to clear up the confusion. What does remain apparent is Williams' late intention to depict his own early temptation toward the sophisticated world of the expatriots and his actual demonstration of how the talent of a poet like Crane could be corrupted by the same influences Williams had rejected.
Despite the sympathy Williams began to feel toward Corydon, she is a character who fails. The Idyl closes with Phyllis resentful toward Corydon's sexual advances and an emphatic reminder of Phyllis's virginity. Thus, the young Paterson's confrontation with the great world of modern poets proves barren.

In contrast to the emphasis on virginity and unsexing which appear in the first section of Book Four, the second section stresses fertility and birth. Williams employs both sexual and scientific metaphors to celebrate the discoveries of his own age. The fertile Madame Curie replaces both the lesbian Corydon and the virgin Phyllis, for she is a "nurse-girl" who is "pregnant," a "little Polish baby nurse" who "after months of labor" discovers the luminous substance which becomes radium. By combining sexual and scientific metaphors, Williams uses Curie to symbolize both the fertility Paterson cannot find in other women and the scientific myth that has come to replace the anthropomorphic myth of the first two books. She becomes a personification of discovery representing not only the literal discovery of radium but also the poet's discovery of a modern idiom and the economist's discovery of a cure for economic ills.

Williams' notes on Madame Curie date back to some of the earliest manuscripts for his long poem, manuscripts composed in the early forties before either the onset of the atomic era or the cold war with Russia that grew in
intensity during the years Williams was publishing the first three books of *Paterson*. Though Madame Curie at one time may have appeared to be a figure who would represent the positive application of scientific knowledge in the twentieth century, by 1950 her work could also be seen as one of the links in a chain of scientific discoveries which had led to the atomic age. When Russia exploded an atomic device in 1949, cold war tensions heightened and atomic warfare seemed more possible than ever. The scientific myth which Williams believed had replaced the anthropomorphic myth had produced a danger Williams could no longer overlook. He had to adapt his Curie material to a world engaged in a cold war and an armaments race. He chose to interlace his celebration of scientific discovery with elements of corruption for personal profit.

The second section of Book Four opens with a father's awareness of the difficulties a new generation will face in a world which has added new problems without solving those of the past. The father recalls a lecture on atomic fission to which he had taken his son. Since the lecture is held in the solarium at the top of a hospital and since doctors are in attendance, the father appears to be Dr. Williams but is undoubtedly also Dr. Paterson. In this section Williams and Paterson function interdependently more than in any other part of the poem; therefore, the son is both one of Williams' own two sons and the next generation of poets who will inherit a world conditioned by
scientific discovery but also permeated by the misuse and abuse of discoveries of all sorts. The father wishes he could use atomic fission to create a better world but knows he must leave the next generation enormous problems, himself a part of these problems.

Smash the world, wide!
--if I could do it for you--
Smash the wide world
a fetid womb, a sump!
No river! no river
but bog, a
swale
sinks into the mind or
the mind into it, a

Norman Douglas (South Wind) said to me, The best thing a man can do for his son, when he is born, is to die.

I gave you another, bigger than yourself, to contend with. (171)

Before he can fully develop his own potential and work on the problems of his world, any son must struggle with his father. Just as Williams struggles throughout Paterson to assert his differences from Pound, a new poetic son begins a similar struggle in Book Four. Several pages later, a letter from Allen Ginsberg introduces him to Williams as a son of the city Paterson and also a reader of Williams' work, a young poet who has inherited Williams' experience "in his struggle to love and know his own world city" (174). Ginsberg envisions for himself "some kind of new speech" and suggests that he may even "need a new measure" but doesn't fully understand what Williams is "doing with cadences, line length, sometimes syntax, etc." (175). Ginsberg also refers to a selection of his own poems he has
sent Williams, poems he recognizes as derivative and calls "youthful attempts to perfect, renew, transfigure, and make contemporarily real an old style of lyric machinery" (174). In this letter, Ginsberg appears to be the poetic son who must contend with his father or fathers since he mentions several mentors besides Williams. Possibly as a response to Ginsberg's letter and warning to Ginsberg's generation, the second section both celebrates discovery and reveals ways in which discovery can be corrupted. The new father-son relationship appears early as an insertion into the lecture on atomic fission and Madame Curie's story; another letter will appear later in Book Four to confirm the identification (194-195).

Following the Ginsberg letter, Williams depicts Curie as a poor but dedicated student devoted to her work despite economic deprivation. He stresses her concern for ideas and uses her actual pregnancy as a metaphor for a fertile mind, describing her "—with ponderous belly, full of thought." She becomes the symbol of fertility Paterson has sought throughout the poem, a fertility which Williams metaphorically relates to the atomic era.

—a furnace, a cavity aching toward fission, a hollow, a woman waiting to be filled

—a luminosity of elements, the current leaping!
Pitchblende from Austria, the valence of Uranium inexplicably
increased. Curie, the man, gave up his work to buttress her.

But she is pregnant! (176)

Curie's fertility and discovery are particularly useful as an analogy for literary fertility and discovery. At one point, Williams associates her with another "pauvre etudiante" (178) by using a quotation from Francois Villon, the fifteenth century French poet who wrote from the depths of poverty. More important, however, is Williams' association of Curie's work with dissonance, a quality related to his own metrical theories.

Believe it or not

A dissonance
in the valence of Uranium
led to the discovery

Dissonance
(if you are interested)
leads to discovery

--to dissect away
the block and leave
a separate metal:

hydrogen
the flame, helium the
pregnant ash . (176)

From the late thirties, Williams had called on American poets to find a new way of measuring, a way to accommodate formally the dissonance in American speech rhythms. Although he still had not elucidated his own theory of the variable foot when he was writing Book Four, he believed himself to be an agent in predicting the discovery of a new metric as surely as the element helium had
been predicted before its discovery and before Curie did her experiments. He saw his own poetic experiments akin to Curie's experiments, acts of love leading toward fruition. He felt himself a literary discoverer. Like Curie, he longed to be alive and potent:

not half asleep
waiting for the sun to part the labia
of shabby clouds . but a man (or
a woman) achieved

flagrant!
adept at thought, playing the words
following a table which is the synthesis
of thought, a symbol that is to him,
sun up! a Mendelief, the elements laid
out by molecular weight, identity
predicted before found! and . (179)

Williams is not merely a half-asleep dreamer like the giant of the first two books nor a lover seeking fulfillment with the wrong women, but he becomes, through his work, a "man . . . achieved/ flagrant!" He becomes a discoverer like Columbus who appears in a brief excerpt from In the American Grain (173) or like Curie. He plays with words in accordance with an unknown metrical system as surely as any scientist could follow Mendelejeff's table of atomic weights.

The reference to Mendelejeff's table goes back as far as 1946 when Williams already viewed his own work as contributing to the development of a new way to measure the American language. In a letter to Parker Tyler, Williams explained how he could predict a discovery he had not yet made but was struggling toward. 24

Someone in the audience, I have seen him before, an older man, asked me if I thought I had given any
evidence of the "new way of measuring" in anything I had read that night or in anything that I myself had written at any time. It was a fair question but one I shall have to postpone answering indefinitely. I always think of Mendelejeff's table of atomic weights in this connection. Years before an element was discovered, the element helium, for instance, its presence had been predicted by a blank in the table of atomic weights.

It may be that I am no genius in the use of the new measure I find inevitable; it may be that as a poet I have not had the genius to do the things I set up as essential if our verse is to blossom. I know, however, the innovation I predict must come to be. Someone, some infant now, will have to find the way we miss.

Between 1946 and 1950, when Williams was writing Book Four, he had continued to experiment with natural speech rhythms, varied line lengths and new poetic topography. Paterson, itself, was a series of such experiments interspersed with parodies of other works. As an experimenter, Williams must have seen himself as a literary Mendelejeff, predicting a new metric and preparing the way for a new generation of poets who would make the final breakthrough. The new father-son relationship in Book Four passes the task of discovery along to poets of Ginsberg's generation though it is almost certain that Williams also hoped he himself would yet make a major contribution to new metrical theory.

Williams could not establish himself as father to a new generation of poets, however, without a warning against abuses of discovery and power. At three points in section two, Williams inserts illustrations of power or discovery which has been perverted. The first is a digression on the abuse of international acclaim. The second relates more
directly to the possible perversion of Curie's discovery and the third directly presents a perversion of Pound's social credit theories. Finally, before the section closes, Williams ridicules another literary genealogy which is a perversion of his own poetics.

The first abuse of power occurs in a section inserted into the Curie material just before the Ginsberg letter. It is loosely attached to the Curie material which suggests international acclaim can become "a drug" (172). In this case, acclaim belongs not to Curie but to the noted American evangelist Billy Sunday who was called to Paterson by the silk manufacturers to help break a strike at the mills. In the poem, Sunday uses his evangelistic talents to turn the workers' thoughts toward God rather than the strike. Williams uses an allusion to the last supper to suggest that the thank offering which Sunday received at the Hamilton Hotel in Paterson was a payoff similar to the payoff Judas received after betraying Christ.

Come on up! Come up Sister and be saved (splitting the atom of bitterness)! And Billy Sunday evangel and ex-rightfielder sets himself to take one off the wall.

He's on the table now! Both feet, singing (a foot song) his feet canonized as paid for by the United Factory Owners' Ass'n to "break" the strike and put those S.O.Bs in their places, be Geezus, by calling them to God!

--getting his 27 Grand in the hotel room after the last supper (at the Hamilton)
on the eve of quitting town, exhausted
in his efforts to split (a split personality) . the plate
What an arm! (173)

Williams may have thought Sunday's corruption of fame
a little like Eliot's diversion of his internationally
famous poetic talent toward religious projects. In The
Rock, Eliot had clearly proclaimed that funding for
churches should come before funding for other social
causes. The play was a huge financial success for the
church. His next religious drama, Murder in the Cathedral,
was financially successful both for the church and for
Eliot himself. Furthermore, his combination of colloquial
speech and liturgical rhythms were hailed as "a turning
point in English drama."^ When Williams wrote of Billy
Sunday having his feet canonized while he made money in the
name of God and ignored relevant social needs, he may well
have been thinking of Eliot's poetic feet which had also
been canonized while he and the church made money on his
religious plays. Though Williams does not associate Eliot
openly with Sunday, he makes a tentative association by
concluding the section with an evangelical pitch and a hymn
which recalls the Book Two evangelist Klaus Ehrens and his
musical accompaniment.

Come to Jesus! . Someone help
that old woman up the steps . Come to
Jesus and be . All together now,
give it everything you got!

Brighten

. . the corner where you
are! (173)
The final refrain of the evangelical hymn serves a dual purpose, ironically relating Billy Sunday to both Curie and to Beautiful Thing. While Curie brightens her corner of the world with valuable scientific discovery, Sunday brightens his corner by lining his own pockets at the expense of the working classes, classes represented by Beautiful Thing who in Book Three had been urged to brighten her own corner. Repetition of the refrain in a context so obviously designed to highlight the perversion of power adds poignancy to Williams' earlier use of the hymn in relation to his black servant girl. Any discovery, religious, scientific, economic or poetic, can be perverted by those who hold positions of power.

Just a few pages later, Williams suggests still another perversion of power. The love Madame Curie lavished on her work becomes dangerous when it is directed toward atomic weaponry.

Love is a kitten, a pleasant thing, a purr and a pounce. Chases a piece of string, a scratch and a mew a ball batted with a paw a sheathed claw.

Love, the sledge that smashes the atom? No, No! antagonistic cooperation is the key, says Levy (177)

During the cold war with Russia, America's "sheathed claw" was her absolute control over the atomic bomb, but the usefulness of this claw diminished when Russia exploded a nuclear bomb in 1949. Hyman Levy, the Marxist mathematician who lived in England and dabbled in philosophy,
appears in this context to be expressing a policy which would deemphasize atomic weaponry to allow the west to cooperate with their Communist antagonists.

If Levy's position was one of "antagonistic cooperation," other groups in the western world called for an unprecedented arms build-up. One such American group combined an anti-Communist stance with a corrupted version of the Social Credit movement. Williams selected a portion of their cranky propaganda and included it as an "Advertisement" immediately preceding his support of Pound's social credit theories.26 The advertisement proposed credit for producers of arms, exactly the opposite of Pound's goals and of the American Social Credit Movement which Williams had once supported. The advertisement suggests a new way to finance the building of airplanes and states in part, "To win the cold war we must reform our finance system. The Russians understand only force. We must be stronger than they and build more airplanes" (181). Though the American Social Credit Movement had originally been promoted to destroy poverty among individuals and help preserve peace through harmonious domestic relationships, private groups were now promoting credit reform for a munitions build-up which could lead to war. The perversion of social credit is somewhat analogous to the perversion of Curie's discovery. Although radium had led to a cure for certain kinds of cancer, the discovery had also prompted other discoveries which eventually led to atomic fission
and the atomic bomb. Discoveries of all sorts could be perverted toward dangerous or evil ends.

Without comment, Williams placed the National Credit "Advertisement" beside a favorable analogy of credit and radium, knowing some readers would be deceived into believing the two perspectives supported each other. In a letter to Laughlin regarding the passage, Williams reveals the subtlety of his intentions.27

One thing on Part 2, the National Credit bit which is headed Advertisement should be got in on one page and should be set in a smaller and different faced type from the rest of the book—just as advertisements that simulate the normal text are run in magazines generally. The type used in such cases, as you know, is not widely different from the rest of the text but shades it a little so that the unwary reader might mistake the two. Get it?

Anyone who accepted the National Credit ad and its advocation of arms build-up could be duped into financially supporting a war. Pound, himself, had been duped into promoting Mussolini's Fascist government in the thirties and had found himself caught up in a war against his own native country in the early forties. The false propaganda is another corruption of power and another perversion of what Williams believed was basically a beneficial discovery—the discovery of a social credit system designed to benefit individuals from the middle and lower classes rather than special interest groups.

In Book Three, Williams had implied that he would discover the valuable essence of Pound's poetry, an essence he at that time still associated with Pound's use of the
poetic line. His renewed friendship with Pound after Book Three had gone to press, however, convinced him that Pound believed the real value of his work was related to finding the proper financial system which could cure the evil of usury. Just as Williams continued to struggle in his poetry toward discovering an American metric, at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Pound searched through books of history to find logical support for his economic theories and continued to include his findings in The Cantos. Williams had sought in Book Three to discover in Pound's poetry "a stain of sense" (108), a "radiant gist that/ resists the final crystalization" (109). By 1950, Pound had convinced Williams that the radiant gist was related to an equitable system of credit. Williams needed to wind up his satiric portrait of Pound, and with much more generosity than when he had begun the portrait, Williams attempted to celebrate the real value of Pound's economic theories, the value of Pound's intentions.

In the social credit section, credit is associated with radium as a cure for "the cancer, usury" (183). Without actually explaining Pound's theory of social credit, Williams uses a series of analogies and metaphors to indicate that the proper use of credit would be an improvement on the present financial system that keeps credit in the hands of bankers rather than at the disposal of the people. Properly used, credit should become a tool in the redistribution of wealth, a benefit to the poor and a way
to buffer individual misfortunes like medical bills by spreading the cost throughout the community.

In his autobiography, Williams includes a chapter on "Ezra Pound at St. Elizabeth's" written within a few months of the time he completed Book Four. The chapter contains a curious blending of sympathy for and scepticism toward Pound's economic theories. Williams also clearly indicates how Pound had bullied him about economics for years: "All my life has been one steady bawling out from this old intimate over my sluggishness in appreciating the gravity of the world situation in the terms of his dialectic." Williams also admits to arguing with at least part of Pound's economic theory, but in Book Four, he decided to give Pound a fair hearing, a hearing he had been unwilling to allow Pound in Book Two. Williams celebrates social credit in Book Four, but only after he demonstrates that any formal monetary movement can be directed toward war, the very evil Pound so vehemently denounces throughout The Cantos.

Williams' presentation of Pound's economic theories, including the recognition that they can be perverted, is part of the ongoing dialogue with Pound throughout Paterson, part of the poetic son arguing or disagreeing with his poetic father. Just as contenders frequently bring up old grievances in the midst of a new argument, Williams introduces Pound's comment on the well drilling report of Book Three in the middle of the social credit section. Pound had metaphorically suggested Williams was
looking in the wrong books if he couldn't find suitable mental stimulation:

. just because they ain't no water fit to drink in that spot (or you ain't found none) don't mean there ain't no fresh water to be had NOWHERE . . . (183)

Pound's solution would be to keep reading until you find refreshing or inspiring information. Williams responds with a sarcastic parody of a new poem he has found in his recent reading. The parody shows not only that excessive reading, or erudition, may still prove unfruitful but also that a literary geneology based primarily on book learning may be as dangerous as the false application of social credit.

--and to Tolson and to his ode and to Liberia and to Allen Tate (Give him credit) and to the South generally Selah!

--and to 100 years of it--splits off the radium, the Gamma rays will eat their bastard bones out who are opposed Selah!

Pobres bastardos, misquierdos
Probrecitos Ay! que pobres

--yuh wanna be killed with your face in the dirt and a son-of-a-bitch of a Guardia Civil giving you the coup de (dis)grace right in the puss . . !

Selah! Selah!

Credit! I hope you have a long credit and a dirty one
Selah! (183-184)
The parody is of Tolson's *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia*, a portion of which appeared in the July 1950 issue of *Poetry*. Tolson's poem is written as a modified Pindaric Ode and includes elevated metaphors as well as foreign quotations and frequent literary allusions, both classical and contemporary. In a preface to Tolson's poem, Tate called Tolson a direct successor to Hart Crane and went on to claim that Tolson was the first Negro to assimilate "the full poetic language of his time, and by implication the language of the Anglo-American tradition." Williams saw the Anglo-American tradition as a false tradition fostered by Eliot, a group of European traditions which had perverted Crane's natural inclinations to use the American language in his poems. Now Tate, another inheritor of the Anglo-European-American tradition, was celebrating a young member of the coterie.

In his "Libretto," Tolson uses "Selah!" as musical punctuation; Williams uses it as a sarcastic salute to Tolson and Tate. Williams considers Tolson's poem and the tradition associated with Tate's southern school of poetry as a case of misapplied credit. Credit thus becomes a pun referring sarcastically to undeserved approbation such poems are given. Credit given to the wrong literature over a long course of time is as disastrous as social credit perverted toward war. The wrong poetry prevents discovery of the real native language, a language which might communicate and lead to eventual peace rather than war. The
wrong credit will destroy rather than cure just as large doses of Gamma rays will destroy rather than cure. Misdirected credit, like misdirected politics, can kill as surely as Federico García Lorca was executed by a Fascist firing squad. When Williams wishes Tolson and Tate "a long credit/ and a dirty one," he is actually warning against their type of poetry. He is probably warning particularly his own literary son, Ginsberg, who had admitted in his letter to an instinctive imitation of "Crane, Robinson, Tate and old Englishmen" (175).

This sarcastic digression compiles the scientific, economic and literary perversions, and it also introduces a substantial shift in tone from serious celebration to comic sarcasm similar to the shift from Madame Curie to Billy Sunday. Williams continues the commentary on misapplied credit but shifts back and forth between apparent sarcasm and half-hearted seriousness. He works toward the conclusion of his section with two quotations directly from Pound in the same half-joking, half-serious tone.

IN venshun.

O.KAY

In venshun

and seeinz az how yu hv/started. Will you consider a remedy of a lot:

i.e. LOCAL control of local purchasing power

Difference between squalor of spreading slums and splendor of renaissance cities. (185-186)
After allowing Pound to speak in his own voice, Williams finally concludes the section with a serious and moving tribute to his old friend's economic emphasis.

Credit makes solid
is related directly to the effort,
work: value created and received,
"the radiant gist" against all that
scants our lives. (186)

Unlike Tolson and Tate, Pound is the kind of poet who should receive credit both for the intent of his economic theories and for the effort he exerts in proclaiming them in his literary work. Whether or not Williams fully understood or fully agreed with all of Pound's economic theories, by 1950 he had decided to allow them a major place in the final book of his long poem. Though historic and economic prattle had led Faitoute to cry in Book Two, "No poet has come," by Book Four Williams recognized and celebrated Pound's basic purposes and effort.

The second section is a strange blending of celebration and scepticism, of sarcasm and seriousness, of satire and social comment. Early plans for Paterson had suggested that Madame Curie would be used as a positive figure to celebrate scientific discovery as opposed to the outdated Christian myth, but like so many figures in Paterson, Curie developed far beyond Williams' original plans for her. In Book Four, Williams links her discoveries in science to his own discoveries in language and Pound's discoveries in economics, but he also warns that discoveries can be perverted. Thus, he winds up his satiric portrait of Pound on
a curiously moralistic note. It may have been partially
the awareness that his poem had progressed from satire to
moralization that prompted Williams' placement of the
Chaucer quotation he had once used in his letter to Tyler.

The quotation is drawn from The Canterbury Tales at a
point where the Host tells Chaucer his satiric rhyme isn't
worth a turd, and Chaucer continues instead with his dull
but moralistic prose "Tale of Melibee."^{30}

Sir Thopas (The Canterbury Pilgrims) says (to Chaucer)
Namoor—
Thy drasty rymyng is not
worth a toord
--and Chaucer seemed to think so too for he stopped and
went on in prose . (177)

Williams uses the quotation to assert that both prose
and poetry, seriousness and satire can exist side by side
in the same poem. Like Chaucer in The Canterbury Tales,
Williams has combined both genres and both tones. In his
fourth book, however, Williams' attitudes toward the poets
he had satirized in Book One have shifted. Pound, despite
the temporary perversion of his talent to Fascist causes,
has been vindicated and celebrated for the intentions of
his social credit theories. Crane, who had been the butt
of humor in Book One, has become a poor pawn who wrote
under the influence of Eliot and other European writers.
Eliot, of course, has remained the enemy along with all his
contemporary followers from Tate to Tolson. Williams, him-
self, has moved from the position of literary satirist to
literary judge, and his perspective in Book Four frequently
moves more toward the prose "Tale of Melibee" with its heavy moralism than the "Rime of Sir Thopas" with its lighter satire. Although Williams had been seriously promoting his own poetic beliefs throughout Paterson, in Book Four, he comes dangerously close to suggesting that they are the only way an American poet can survive.

In the final section of his long poem, Williams continues to blend serious and satiric subjects, for he had left the completion of his portraits of both Cummings and Eliot for this section. By 1950, however, Williams had almost lost interest in Cummings and included the historic murder which completes Cummings' portrait as much for its contribution to the "sea of blood" as for the reference to Cummings. His final confrontation with Eliot, however, runs through both his serious and satiric passages. The rationalization for and defense of his own Paterson and by extension of The Cantos appears in a framework associated with Eliot's presentation of old age in "Little Gidding." Four Quartets, in fact, looms behind the final section of Williams' poem just as it had provoked much of his Preface and Book Three.

"Little Gidding" was written in 1942 when both England and America were fighting in World War II, when London was suffering nightly air raids with their daily aftermaths of fire. A major scene from "Little Gidding" is set in the London dawn after the usual nightly air raid, but Eliot does not directly attempt to present the horrors of war.
Rather, he uses the setting to introduce a "compound ghost" whom critics have associated with Dante, Swift and Yeats. Eliot consciously modeled his poetry for this section on Dante's terza rima, working hard to find an English equivalent for Dante's form: yet when the ghost appears, it is not poetic theory he chooses to discuss. His words present, instead, a chilling portrait of old age, suggesting that most of what man considers virtuous during his lifetime is petty, self-seeking, and harmful to others.

Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age to set a crown upon your lifetime's effort. First, the cold friction of expiring sense Without enchantment, offering no promise But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit As body and soul begin to fall asunder. Second, the conscious impotence of rage At human folly, and the laceration Of laughter at what ceases to amuse. And last, the rending pain of re-enactment Of all that you have done, and been; the shame Of motives late revealed, and the awareness Of things ill done and done to others' harm Which once you took for exercise of virtue Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains. From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.

The ghost's automatic assumption that man's sense of virtue is related to a kind of rationalized goodness man later regrets and sees as vice must have powerfully affected Williams. Throughout Paterson, Williams had been rationalizing and demonstrating his entire poetic position even as he satirized the positions of others. In his earliest plans, he had promised that Book Four would focus on "all that any one man may achieve in a lifetime." Thus, Book
Four had originally been planned to summarize Paterson's virtues, to celebrate his major achievements. These achievements fall roughly into three time frames: Paterson as a young man resisting the temptations of a sophisticated culture and poetics borrowed from Europe, Paterson as a mature poet offering judgment on the events of his era and passing advice to his poetic sons, and finally, Paterson as an old man whose life and long poem are drawing to a conclusion.

Eliot's compound ghost could not have suggested any pattern of old age farther removed from the wisdom of old age Williams intended to suggest. For Eliot's ghost, old age creates "rending pain" as one reenacts his life and "shame" as one realizes base motives have prompted actions "done to other's harm." Furthermore, these actions had at one time seemed an "exercise of virtue." Williams had to counter such a position by claiming that one's view of virtue might shift with age but that it never shifts to the point where virtue appears to be vice. For Williams, virtue became a topic worthy of the aging Paterson's reverie.

The first reference to virtue in Book Four appears in a dialogue between Phyllis and Corydon when Corydon cautions Phyllis never to be "ashamed of your origins" because Phyllis has called her father "a drunk." Corydon uses the situation to point out that "Virtue . . . if one had it! is only interesting in the aggregate" (157) and to suggest that Phyllis is a "Prodigal Daughter," a daughter who
doesn't appreciate her father's concern for her welfare. The young Paterson thus becomes a prodigal son unappreciative of Pound's concern for his literary welfare. Although Williams never follows up this reference in the first section, he does clearly show in the second section that the prodigal Paterson respects his literary father Pound even though he also recognizes past weaknesses.

Eliot's ghost had preached a Christian homily which underlies all of *Four Quartets*, the need to recognize sin and seek expiation. Bodily decay, lacerating wisdom and self-punishment are the gifts of old age unless a man submits to pentecostal and purgatorial fire for renewal. Williams believed, instead, that renewal could be achieved through a constant awareness of the hidden beauty of every aspect of life.

As the third section begins, Williams stresses his own old age, then insists on pausing in his poem to recollect a series of gifts, no doubt his own version of "gifts reserved for age" and quite different from those promised by Eliot's ghost. Without remorse, Williams recalls several gifts that focus on the complexity of virtue. The first gift is a story told by an old friend, the simple tale of a couple, man and woman, unknown to each other, who sleep naked side by side and awaken refreshed, who are renewed by their shared experience. Told in a prose fragment, the tale implies a kind of passive virtue that could be associated with the sleeping giant Paterson but not with the
dynamic poet Williams. The next gift is an old ashtray inscribed in French with the legend "Virtue is wholly/ in the effort to be virtuous" (189). This time, the meditation appears in poetic lines of fragmented sentences, lines and sentences similar to those found throughout Pound's *Cantos*. The older Williams ponders the legend, recalling different attitudes toward virtue in childhood, noting that the sense of virtue changes with the swiftness of a dandelion turning to seed, that virtuous motives are really masks, but that even the masks are virtuous. Both the fragmentary thoughts and the fractured structures pile up a new sense of the complexity associated with any man's concept of virtue. Finally, the language exercise itself becomes actively virtuous.

Kill the explicit sentence, don't you think? and expand our meaning—by verbal sequences. Sentences, but not grammatical sentences: dead-falls set by schoolmen. Do you think there is any virtue in that? better than sleep to revive us? (189)

"Dead-falls set by schoolmen" is more than a commentary on academic standards; it is a pun on Williams' entire poem, on the falls that thunder in Paterson's dreams and that carried Patch and Cumming to their deaths. It now becomes clear that Williams' meditations on virtue are a comment on language experimentation of the kind that he, Pound and Cummings have tried in their poems. Unlike the old man predicted by Eliot's ghost, Williams is a wise old man able to see the long-term virtue in his own work and to realize that appreciation of such virtue varies as language
varies and as conditions change. His meditations are thus a justification of language experimentation in poetry, experimentation which attempts to get beyond scholarly "dead-falls" to the vibrant falls of a living language. Williams later relates his meditation on virtuous effort to Paterson when he repeats "toute dans l'effort" (191) while describing the difficulty he has had pulling together the disparate aspects of his own poem.

Williams' final speculation on virtue is a literary mid-point between the simple prose story and the Pound-like poetic meditation; it is vintage Williams, the poet writing at his best. At the time of his mother's funeral, Williams recalls her perception of virtue. Although he does not identify her, the respect and dignity he accords her in simple language produces still another dimension of virtue:

Virtue, she would say .
(her version of it)
is a stout old bird,
unpredictable. And
so I remember her,
adding,
as she did, clumsily,
not being used to
such talk, that—
Nothing does, does
as it used to do
do do! I loved her. (190)

Nothing is the same to the old as it was when they were young, yet virtue lasts even though it changes, and what was once virtuous never becomes shameful. Virtue cannot be judged by any one individual at any one point in life and remain fixed. Like man's memory, or like language,
a sense of virtue must shift as man's knowledge, experience and perceptions shift. Neither ghost nor man can ever pin down virtue, but an older poet's meditations and appreciation of his aged mother's wisdom are both virtuous and a refutation of the harrowing portrait of old age without Christian expiation presented by Eliot's ghost.

But Williams does more in his final section than challenge Eliot's ghost on old age. He also demonstrates a major difference from Eliot in his use of historic information, particularly information related to murder and war. Williams had become aware of this difference in the treatment of history as far back as the thirties when Eliot wrote *Murder in the Cathedral* and may have been reminded of the difference again when he read "Little Gidding" in the forties. In both the play and the poem, Eliot avoids direct presentation of historic events and turns his historic material mainly toward symbolic purposes. A World War II air raid in "Little Gidding" evokes a contemporary inferno but without graphic description and serves primarily as the setting for a spiritual message from Eliot's compound ghost. In another episode, Eliot introduces the English Civil War as representative of all wars. Once again he turns the reference to his own religious purposes as he reminds his readers that after death the men who served on both sides "are folded in a single party" and that war dead ultimately leave for the living "a symbol/ a symbol perfected in death."33 The entire fourth quartet
presents a program of spiritual reconciliation. Thus, war and death become symbols for one final time when man can yet be reconciled to God. Williams resented the way Eliot avoided any direct treatment of war, the way he used it to proclaim a spiritual message. This resentment went back to the thirties when Eliot had first begun turning his poetic talents toward the presentation of Christian dogma.

One of Eliot's most successful religious works was *Murder in the Cathedral*, a play based on the historic murder and martyrdom of Thomas Becket. Eliot had used the murder as an opportunity to explore the theme of God's purposes as opposed to man's own desires. He had gone beyond the political and social causes of Becket's murder to probe the religious temptations Becket faced and the secular rationalizations his murderers concocted. To do this, he depended on a background of Christian education on the part of his audience, for the play held special religious meaning for Christians. *Murder in the Cathedral* was brought to America in the first three months of 1938 but was less successful here than it had been in England. In England, advance publicity had guaranteed an audience of church groups and others knowledgeable about Christianity. Such publicity was lacking in America and the secular audience which was drawn to the opening performances did not understand many of the play's nuances.

In March of 1938, Williams wrote "Against the Weather: A Study of the Artist." In describing the role of the
artist in society, at one point, Williams lashed out at artists who translated the sensuality of their material into symbols. He used Eliot's play as an example:

It comes to this: Murder can't be murder—it has to be some special sort of murder—with a quasi-secret, cabalistic significance—not understood by everyone. It has to be murder in the cathedral—whose momentum is lost, at the full, except to the instructed few.

It may well have been in reaction against Eliot's play that Williams first began collecting historic accounts of murders which had occurred in Paterson. From the earliest complete outline of his poem, written in the late thirties or early forties, Williams planned to incorporate a series of murders. Yet Williams used only one of the murders he originally planned and at some point, he began looking for historic murders which would serve dual purposes. The final murders he chose to include in Paterson have in common two qualities which radically differentiate them from Murder in the Cathedral. First, they are reported in straightforward journalistic prose and secondly, they are committed for relatively trivial but common motives—property rights, money, annoyance, an old grudge—but these motives, on a national scale can also lead to war.

Williams carefully selected murders which could also function like much of his other historic prose, murders which would contribute directly to the larger satiric purposes of Paterson. With careful placement and careful editing, Williams could mock Eliot through actual prose accounts
which simultaneously demonstrated a basic difference in literary perspectives between the two poets.

In Book Two, Williams included one prose fragment relating a murder which had occurred in the park at Garret Mountain, the setting for Book Two. The murder is taken almost verbatim from a newspaper story recounting how William Dalzell shot Joseph Van Houten and the angry mob scene which resulted (46). Van Houten was a member of the German Singing Societies of Paterson who had come to Garret Mountain in May of 1880 for their annual picnic. Dalzell shot Van Houten, claiming that the visitors had in previous years walked over his garden and that this year he would stop them from crossing any part of his ground. After the shooting, an "infuriated mob" tried to burn Dalzell's barn to get at the murderer, who then fired again, this time injuring a little girl in the cheek. The angry crowd "now numbered some ten thousand" and would have fought the police to get their hands on Dalzell had not William McNulty, Dean of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, intervened. In full view of the mob, McNulty took Dalzell by the arm and led him to his hack in which the two rode off to safety. Williams breaks off the passage in the middle of a sentence just after the "bravery of the Dean" has been mentioned. By concluding with the heroic Catholic clergyman who prevented greater bloodshed, Williams sets up a contrast to the windy evangelist, Klaus Ehrens, who appears later in Book Two.
Book two also prepares the reader for a series of murders, each to be depicted in graphic detail and most to be reserved as illustrations of the sea of blood in Book Four. Allegorically, Williams associated the sea of blood with violence which could be prevented if man would learn to truly communicate, if he could possess the language Paterson seeks to untangle from the roar of the falls, a graphic language without the kind of symbolism that disguises both the brutality and beauty of life. In Book Four, Williams includes both murder and war, dealing with them directly so that the individual horrors of isolated events will build toward the greater horror of mass killing which occurs during war.

You come today to see killed killed, killed
as if it were a conclusion —a conclusion!
a convincing strewing of corpses —to move the mind

as tho' the mind


can be moved, the mind, I said
by an array of hacked corpses:

War!

a poverty of resource . .

Twenty feet of guts on the black sands of Iwo (199)

The "hacked corpses" include those persons from the prose inserts who have been bayonetted, butchered or otherwise killed throughout Paterson's history as well as those killed in war. "Iwo" refers to Iwo Jima, the Pacific Island where U. S. Marines fought the Japanese in one of
the fiercest and most costly battles of World War II. Neither murder nor war is here treated symbolically; rather, both are presented in their grizzly horror. "What have I done?" Williams asks himself, almost shocked at the fierceness of his statement and hardly able to believe he can penetrate the complacency of a public "used to death," possibly a public that has been led to accept war and murder as evidence of man's original sin or to view death as a mere preliminary to rebirth.

At this point, Williams integrates his direct treatment of murder and war with his own larger literary allegory. As the section began, Williams had created a disembodied voice, a voice which urged him to "get going" toward the allegorical meeting of his river of language and sea of blood. Like Eliot's ghost, the unidentified voice appears to be a poet or poets, for it understands several languages, has a classical education, and displays a knowledge of traditional symbols and imagery. Unlike Eliot's ghost, the disembodied voice challenges Williams about the various aspects of his poem. After his impassioned statement about war, Williams is taunted by the voice which implies that his warning is unnecessary, that war cannot again engulf America. The voice urges him to waken from "this dream of/ the whole poem" which is "sea-bound," headed for the "sea that sucks in all/ rivers" (200). The dream is Williams' dream of a redeeming language that can allow man to communicate so fully that he will not turn to violence to assert
his will, the dream of a language that can prevent Paterson
or America from being again drawn into war, from being
drowned by the "sea of blood." Williams argues with the
voice, fearful of America's military involvement in Korea.

Turn back I warn you
(October 10, 1950)
from the shark, that snaps
at his own trailing guts, makes a sunset
of the green water. (200)

In October of 1950, American Marines were again fight­
ing on foreign soil as they had at Iwo Jima. The image of
the shark snapping at his own guts in bloody water suggests
a self-destructive bloodlust implicit in war which to
Williams is murder on a large scale.

The taunting voice continues to sound more and more
like a collection of poets, like Eliot who concluded Four
Quartets with a promise of rebirth and reconciliation of
the faithful with God, like Pound whose classical allusions
run all through The Cantos or even like Stevens who viewed
the poet as a creator of fictions, a maker of metaphors.

The voice turns tempter, urging Williams to conclude his
poem in some traditional way, as a Greek tragedy twisting
inevitably toward punishment and death or as a Christian
homily interlacing death with promises of rebirth. The
voice uses classical allusions, traditional imagery and
poetic language to diminish the sea's horror: "the time sea
is/ no more than sleep is" (200); "the sea is our home"
(201); "you will come to it . . . the song is in your ears"
(201).
"The sea is not our home" (201), insists Williams, struggling to remain master of his own poem. Then, with a passionate piling of traditional metaphors, the tempting voice makes one final plea, and Williams shouts his final reply.

Thalassa! Thalassa!
Drink of it, be drunk!
Thalassa
 immaculata: our home, our nostalgic
mother in whom the dead, enwombed again
cry out to us to return .
the blood dark sea!
nicked by the light alone, diamonded
by the light . from which the sun
alone lifts undamped his wings
of fire!

. . not our home! It is NOT
our home. (202)

Williams will not accept the traditional ways to disguise death in poetry nor will he use poetry to create a supreme fiction that sends men willingly off to a bloody war. He will continue to insist that Americans must seek their own language, a language to communicate with such clarity that man may strive to avoid murder and war. Literally, Williams has won the struggle to retain his own poetic individually, to refuse outdated symbolism and myths, to insist on a direct approach to his world and its problems. Allegorically, he has fought to rescue his hero who is suddenly discovered afloat in the river of language and could be carried toward a sea of blood.

The intense drama of the earlier passages cannot be sustained when Williams returns to the hero he had
once presented as the drunken son of a braggart father.
Williams shifts to comedy as he sights Paterson adrift like floating wreckage, probably an intentional echo of "The Dry Salvages." 36

What's that?
--a duck, a hell-diver? A swimming dog?
What, a sea-dog? There it is again.
A porpoise, of course, following
the mackerel. No. Must be the up-end of something sunk. But this is moving!
Maybe not. Flotsam of some sort. (202)

Paterson is recognized first by his dog, the poem that has waited patiently while its hero casually went swimming in the river of language, the same river which had killed those early adventurers, Patch and Cumming. The dog welcomes its master who has come ashore in a mock-epic scene that recalls Odysseus arriving at the land of Alkinoos while Nausikaa plays ball on the beach. 37

Wiping his face with his hand he turned to look back to the waves, then knocking at his ears, walked up to stretch out flat on his back in the hot sand. There were some girls, far down the beach, playing ball. (203)

After resting, Paterson awakens not as an old man but revived by the very sea that had drowned others, revived as a rugged American who dresses not like an epic hero but much like the traditional picture of young Walt Whitman.

--must have slept. Got up again, rubbed the dry sand off and walking a few steps got into a pair of faded overalls, slid his shirt on overhead (the sleeves were still rolled up) shoes, hat where she had been watching them under the bank and turned again to the water's steady roar, as of a distant
waterfall. Climbing the bank, after a few tries, he picked some beach plums from a low bush and sampled one of them, spitting the seed out, then headed inland, followed by the dog (203)

Williams definitely intended an identification with Whitman in this closing sequence; he explained the reason for this identification while discussing the poem Paterson in his Autobiography. 38

In the end the man rises from the sea where the river appears to have lost its identity and accompanied by his faithful bitch, obviously a Chesapeake Bay retriever, turns inland toward Camden where Walt Whitman, much traduced, lived the latter years of his life and died. He always said that his poems, which had broken the dominance of the iambic pentameter in English prosody, had only begun his theme. I agree. It is up to us, in the new dialect, to continue it by a new construction upon the syllables.

Not only does this passage explain why Paterson's search is to be identified with Whitman, but it also suggests how Williams saw himself as another poet breaking with dominant traditions from foreign sources, many of which had been revitalized by Eliot and Pound. Ironically, Williams concludes his literary allegory and satiric portrait of Eliot with historic excerpts which appear to be presented only as part of the sea of blood.

At some point after he had decided to counter Eliot's symbolic approach to murder with his own more factual accounts, Williams realized that two of the historic murders could serve dual purposes. Both are murders of Americans by Englishmen. In the first, a party of Tories murders Jonathan Hopper and in the second an Englishman
murders John S. Van Winkle. In Book One, Williams altered Hooper Cumming's name to Hopper Cumming, a character who can easily be associated with E. E. Cummings, one of Williams' literary giants. He emphasized Hopper again in the grasshopper sequence of Book Two and set aside the Hopper murder for use in his last book. In Book One, Williams also portrayed Hart Crane as a literary giant and promised to deal with him later in the poem. In the last section of Book Three, Crane reenters the poem, and in the first section of Book Four, The Bridge is associated with Corydon's poetic failure. In The Bridge, Rip Van Winkle is featured as part of America's mythical past, and Williams undoubtedly planned to use the historic Van Winkle murder in part as the murder of Crane's poem but probably also to suggest the murder of American poetry in general.

In Book Two, Williams first refers to Van Winkle's murderer even though he has not yet presented the murder itself. While Faitoute listens to Klaus Ehrens' interminable sermon about money, he looks out over the landscape and recalls a man who murdered for money and was hanged.

From here, one could see him—that tied man, that cold blooded murderer. April! in the distance being hanged. Groups at various vantages along the cliff. having gathered since before daybreak to witness it.

One kills for money but doesn't always get it. (72)

Literally, the passage refers to the hanging of John Johnson the English murderer of John Van Winkle and his
wife, and this relationship is established in Book Four when both the murder and the hanging are reported in prose fragments. Allegorically, the passage refers to Eliot's murder of Williams' American poetic movement by his publication of *The Waste Land* and by extension to Eliot's murder of Crane's American poem. The reference to April as a murderer barely suggests *The Waste Land*, but Williams certainly did not intend that his readers make this association until later books were published. He moves closer toward the association of April with Eliot in Book Three, during the flood of erudition, when he asks, "Who is it spoke of April?" (142) Also, in his *Autobiography*, written during the same year he worked on Book Four, Williams admitted that publication of *The Waste Land* had set his own work toward a new local art form "back twenty years." 39 Williams complained of Eliot's early poem, "To me especially it struck like a sardonic bullet." In Book Two, Williams was already preparing for an allegorical hanging of the poet who had fired that bullet.

Williams must have planned from the time he prepared the final version of Book One to reserve three prose fragments for use in concluding his satiric literary allegory. The three fragments are all related to death and easily fit into the third section of Book Four as part of the sea of blood.

The first allegorical prose fragment appears at the very beginning of the third section (187-188). It is the
story of Jonathan Hopper's brutal murder by a "party of Tories" as a result of "an old grudge." The Tories shoot and then savagely bayonette Hopper in full view of his wife and children. A reference to the wife taking "blood out of the bed in double handfuls" identifies the incident as the beginning of the sea of blood. Allegorically, Hopper relates back to Hopper Cumming or E. E. Cummings whose literary work has been killed by the English just as an American movement in poetry was once killed by Eliot. When Williams first found the Hopper murder, English critics had either ignored or castigated Cummings' poems, and none of Cummings' books had been published in England. In 1947, however, when Cummings' 1 x 1 was finally published in England, it "baffled and infuriated reviewers, some of whom returned the book unread." Thus, the English literary establishment could be said to have effectively murdered Cummings for an old grudge against American poetic innovation. Though Williams completed his early plan by including the satiric prose fragment in Book Four, he did not find any extended way to round out his portrait of Cummings, a failure he would later rectify in a fifth book.

The next satiric prose fragment winds up the early depiction of Eliot as Peter the dwarf. In this fragment, an undertaker is "moving bodies from the cellar of the old church to make room for a new furnace" when he discovers the "enormous skull" of Peter the dwarf (193). The fragment takes on additional meaning in relation to Madame
Curie who had been described earlier as "a furnace, a cavity aching/ toward fission, a hollow, a woman waiting to be filled" (176). Madame Curie's fertile scientific mind plus all the associations of scientific, economic and literary discovery related to her work are a fit furnace for the church of the twentieth century where the scientific myth has replaced old anthropomorphic myths.

The final satiric prose fragment is the story of Van Winkle's murder by John Johnson and Johnson's subsequent hanging. The fragment is divided into two segments which are strategically placed. The first segment appears as part of the "sea of blood." This part of the story recounts Johnson's murder of Van Winkle by knife and hatchet, his capture and his "denying any knowledge of or participation in the inhuman butchery" (199). The second prose segment is placed after Paterson's sea rescue. It reveals that Johnson was an Englishman hanged in April. Literally, the fragment simply completes the historic facts about Van Winkle's murder, but Williams must have also intended an allegorical interpretation, for he had no other reason to place the fragment after Paterson's rescue or to highlight it as a part of his conclusion. Furthermore, Williams added five lines which suggest a humorous and satiric dimension both to the prose fragment and to the entire poem.

John Johnson, from Liverpool, England, was convicted after 20 minutes conference by the Jury. On April 30th, 1850, he was hung in full view of thousands who had
gathered on Garret Mountain and adjacent house tops to witness the spectacle. (203)

This is the blast
the eternal close
the spiral
the final somersault
the end.

Allegorically, Eliot is hanged on a mountain where as Klaus Ehrens, he has preached. He is hanged at the end of April for a poem that began in April, a poem that at one time had seemed to kill Williams' American poetic movement. In addition to suggesting Paterson's final triumph over Eliot and English influence, the hanging has a particularly subtle relevance. In The Waste Land, Madame Sosistris examines her Tarot deck and comments, "I do not find/ the hanged man." In his elaborately academic notes, Eliot arbitrarily associated the hanged man with Frazer's hanged god and a Christ-like figure in his poem. When the Englishman who hangs in April becomes Eliot, Eliot joins his own self-proclaimed Gods, a subtle stroke of humor characteristic of Williams' humor throughout Paterson. This satiric conclusion is "the eternal close," far different from the eternity suggested in Four Quartets. It is also "the blast," Williams' own poetic version of Pound's short-lived polemical magazine Blast. Finally, it concludes Paterson in a way that associates Williams with his own early depiction of Quevedo as "a gossip and an inspired clown." It is the last trick of an inspired clown, "the spiral,/ the final somersault/ the end."
It is not strange that critics have found Book Four the most perplexing of Williams' four books because Book Four is primarily Williams' windup of the satiric portraits of his giants. Although Williams attempted to indicate the larger allegory of the book to a few friends and briefly mentioned the hero's rescue in his Autobiography, he could not totally defend his final book without revealing the full force of his still secret satire, which, unless seen as a playful exaggeration of Eliot's and Pound's elaborate literary pontification, might have diminished Williams' reputation rather than enhanced it.

In addition, by 1950, the satire was not nearly so devastating as Williams had at one time intended. Williams' attitudes toward the giants he had created in Book One had shifted since the late thirties and early forties. Although he linked Crane's homosexuality to a lesbian poetess in Book Four, he also treated the poetess with sympathy and wound up blaming Eliot and other unfavorable influences for Crane's poetic failure. Although notes and manuscripts indicate that at one time Williams probably had planned to ridicule Pound's economic theories to the very end and to celebrate only Pound's use of the poetic line, he changed his mind and honored his poetic father's economic theories for their salutary intent. Although he included the brief prose fragment winding up his portrait of Cummings, he did nothing to strengthen the earlier suggestion that Cummings, like Pound, was something of a hero,
but left him merely another victim of the English. Finally, Williams seemed to take pains to hide even the final passage on Peter the dwarf, perhaps because it was the most likely one to be associated with Eliot and because Eliot was still living, a dominant force on the literary scene. Thus, though Williams did conclude all the portraits he had begun in Book One, the only really severe thrust in Book Four was at Eliot, and Williams could be almost certain it would take years to unravel the various parodies and satiric passages aimed at his archenemy.

In addition to the low-key conclusion of his satire, Williams made a definite effort to satisfactorily conclude the historic and language themes praised earlier by the critics. In the closing section of Book Four, he included a manuscript from much-earlier days, a free-verse poem probably first designed to depict the factual flow of history as part of the river's flow to the sea. Williams took his language almost verbatim from Charles Pitman Longwell's memoir entitled *A Little Story of Old Paterson as Told by an Old Man.* Williams altered Longwell's prose by a principle of selection and arrangement until it appeared as free verse, the kind of formless poetry written by many American poets early in the twentieth century. Parts of the free verse poem are interwoven with other prose related to places mentioned in the poem, and one piece of prose is a second letter from the literary son, Ginsberg. Williams probably included the history as part of his demonstration
that factual events have a place in poetry and as part of his assertion that poetry is closely related to prose. He may also have included it, however, as part of a direct refutation of Eliot's assertion in "Little Gidding" that "History is now and England." For Williams, history was the past and America.

Williams must have known by 1950 that it would take years before the various pieces of his comic collage would be put together like parts of a puzzle. He also knew soon after publication of Book Four that some critics were unable to accept as poetry the collection of trivia interspersed with poignant lyrics which Paterson seemed to have become. Not only did the verse drama of Part One center on such an impolite and seemingly unrelated topic as lesbianism, but its language emphasis seemed tangential rather than synoptic. The bits and scraps of prose culled from old history books and other men's letters appeared to some as items which could be lifted from any particular point in the poem and dropped in at another position without overall loss of relevance. Finally, the rambling free verse history fell flat and offered no final clue to Williams' overall perspective of history. The final book was not only an unsatisfactory conclusion; in itself, it simply did not cohere. Nevertheless, critics like Louis Martz already had begun to examine Paterson in relation to Williams' entire career. Others had begun to look closely at individual themes which were interwoven among all four books. Still
others were so impressed by discrete segments of the poem that they willingly suspended judgment until much closer readings could be made. Thus, the task of unraveling Paterson was left in part to future readers.

Williams, himself, was not fully satisfied with the conclusion of his long poem, but he knew the poem concealed a hidden story which might yet be uncovered in the course of time. The poem was, after all, a literary autobiography, a weaving together of Williams' poetics and his poetic peeves. With a now firmly established literary reputation, he had no need to hurry his readers toward his own interpretations. He would, in coming years, commend different critics for views that were widely divergent and feel hurt by those like Jarrell whom he felt had betrayed him. By his own efforts and because his reputation was constantly growing, he would keep alive the interest in his strange poem. Eventually, he would even attempt to assess his own position as an artist among artists, would produce a fifth book and would be working on a sixth at the time of his death. Paterson's story was Williams' story; it had to continue as long as Williams lived.
NOTES

CHAPTER VII


2. Williams, I Wanted to Write a Poem, p. 88, and Bergonzi, p. 174.

3. Mariani, pp. 94-99, summarizes the early criticism of Book Four.

4. Yale manuscripts for some portions of Book Four which involved changes from earlier manuscripts are dated Jan. 1950. On Mar. 3, 1950, Williams wrote to Laughlin that Book Four was "well started." He mailed the three parts of Book Four separately to New Directions on Aug. 29, Sept. 27 and Oct. 13 as each was completed.

5. Crane, p. 45.

6. Crane, pp. 48 and 56.


10. Crane, pp. 107-112. In a letter to Otto Kahn written Sept. 12, 1927, Crane told Otto Kahn that he was pleased The Criterion had accepted "The Tunnel" because Mr. T. S. Eliot "is representative of the most exacting literary standards of our times." Weber, p. 253.


13 Weber, p. 265, quotes the following from Crane's letter: "Is the last statement sentimentally made by Eliot.

'This is the way the world ends,
This is the way the world ends,—
Not with a bang but a whimper.'

is this acceptable or not as the poetic determinism of our age? I of course can say no, to myself, and believe it."


15 See Chapter VI, Note #39.

16 Yale manuscripts: Part 1, Book Four.

17 Williams, Selected Letters, p. 302.

18 Williams, I Wanted to Write a Poem, p. 91. Without mentioning Crane, Williams spoke openly of his intentions in a 1956 interview with Edith Heal:

With the approach to the city, international character began to enter the innocent river and pervert it; sexual perversions, such things that every metropolis when you get to know it houses. Certain human elements can't take the gaff, have to become perverts to satisfy certain longings. When human beings herd together, have to have each other, they are very likely to go crooked.

19 Williams, Selected Letters, p. 304.

20 Williams, Selected Letters, p. 305.

21 According to this account, the lesbian was not originally associated with Crane but was a woman Williams knew well. Although the lesbian and her story were undoubtedly a composite of many experiences, it seems likely that the Corydon and Phyllis episodes were patterned not on a single woman but on a romantic triangle involving Hilda Doolittle, Bryher Ellerman and Robert McAlmon.

In his Autobiography, Williams includes accounts of his old friend McAlmon, H. D. and Bryher, the young woman H. D. traveled with and later lived with but also the wealthy young woman McAlmon married and later divorced. Williams hints in his autobiography that the relationship between Bryher and H. D. was in part responsible for the failure of McAlmon's marriage, but he does not include his knowledge that McAlmon's marriage had been strictly a business agreement without sexual commitment, an arrangement which allowed Bryher to travel with H. D. or anyone else
she chose and still maintain a degree of respectability. Several similarities in McAlmon's story suggest that the original Corydon-Phyllis segments may have in part derived from that experience. Like Corydon, both H. D. and Bryher were writers, one a poetess and the other a novelist. Like Corydon, Bryher was wealthy. She proposed to McAlmon a marriage of convenience in order to be able to travel with other women whenever and wherever she wanted. Finally, like Corydon with Phyllis, Bryher used her father's wealth to attract McAlmon away from America, and the couple sailed to Europe on a steamer belonging to her father's shipping line.

From one angle, Corydon appears to be a composite of H. D. and Bryher, while Phyllis appears to represent McAlmon. From another angle, Corydon and Phyllis seem more like H. D. and Bryher with McAlmon not a character at all. At one point in even the early dialogues between Corydon and Phyllis, Corydon questions, "Do you care for almonds?" Phyllis replies, "Nope, I hate all kinds of nuts. They get in your hair . your/ teeth I mean" (152). The almonds may well be a subtle reference to McAlmon which Williams retained to suggest another old friend who had been attracted to Europe as an expatriate. For more background on the McAlmon-Bryher relationship, see Sanford J. Smoller, Adrift Among Geniuses: Robert McAlmon, Writer and Publisher of the Twenties (University Park: PA State Univ. Press, 1975).

22 Yale manuscripts: Book Four, Part One.
23 Yale manuscripts: Book Four, Part Two.
24 Williams, Selected Letters, p. 243.
25 Browne, p. 63.
26 Weaver, pp. 110-116, and note, p. 213.
27 Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Oct. 11, 1950.
28 Williams, Autobiography, p. 341.
29 Weaver, p. 215.
31 Bergonzi, pp. 171-172.
The river is within us, the sea is all about us;
The sea is the land's edge also, the granite
Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses
Its hints of earlier and other creation:
The starfish, the hermit crab, the whale's backbone;
The pools where it offers to our curiosity
The more delicate algae and the sea anemone.
It tosses up our losses, the torn seine,
The shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar
And the gear of foreign dead men.

Book Six of The Odyssey depicts "The Princess at the River." Pound's early Cantos were also closely associated to scenes from The Odyssey.


Kenner, pp. 237-246. Blast was a polemical magazine edited by Wyndham Lewis. As an interpreter of the arts and under Pound's influence, the first issue "proclaimed itself the organ of the Great English Vortex." Blast survived only two issues due mainly to its disfavor with the London literary establishment.
Yale manuscripts: Book Four, Part 3, include a review of *The Years of Transition* by Hastings, Duke of Bedford. The review humorously cites two chapters entitled "Social Credit and Social Credit Continued," and pokes fun at the author's obsession with social credit. It also mentions "crackbrained orthodox finance" and "ASOTOP—or the Appalling Stupidity of the Ordinary Person," both problems for the theoretical author who sounds much like Pound at his polemical best.

Charles Pitman Longwell, *A Little Story of Old Paterson: As Told by an Old Man*, privately published in 1901. A copy of this rare book can be found in the Paterson Public Library. All the material for the long poetic narrative comes from Longwell's book. Though some stanzas are taken verbatim from a single passage, others are a combination of passages. For example, the following passages from differing pages are combined to form a single stanza: "In the early days the Totowa tribe were there, the wigwam and the tomahawk were there; and the hills were silent under the tread of the moccasin. Scattered on either side of the river were the old settlers' farms resting in the quiet of those colonial days" (pp. 10-11). "It was a village of dwelling places of plain citizens and farmers, composed of hearty old Dutch stock, with a toughness to stick and hold fast; although not fast in making improvements" (pp. 8-9). Williams omits some words and combines the two passages to produce the following stanza:

The wigwam and the tomahawk, the Totowa tribe.  
On either side lay the river-farms resting in the quiet of those colonial days: a hearty old Dutch stock, with a toughness to stick and hold fast, although not fast in making improvements.

William, *Selected Letters*, includes comments about Paterson to the following writers and critics: Louis Martz, pp. 278-300; Robert Lowell, pp. 312-313; Ralph Nash, pp. 323-324; H. W. Wells, pp. 333-334; and Sister Bernetta Quinn, pp. 308-310 and p. 334.
CHAPTER VIII

A VIEW FROM THE TOP

In the seven years between publication of Book Four and the addition of Book Five, Williams was busy consolidating his position as one of the most prolific and prominent writers in America. In 1952, Random House published his third novel which completed the Stecker trilogy. In 1954, Desert Music and Other Poems was published and in 1955, Journey to Love, another collection of new poetry.

In addition to writing new poetry, Williams translated two of Sappho's poems from the Greek and assisted John Thirlwall in retrieving sixty-one of his earlier poems from unpublished sources or out-of-date little magazines. He also gathered together and published a group of Selected Essays and assisted Thirlwall in collecting and editing Selected Letters. By 1958, a large body of Williams' writing was available to the American reading public.

As a major American author, Williams also found opportunities to publish some of his pet projects which had not yet appeared in print. With the help of a new little press, in 1954 he finally published his translation of The Dog and the Fever, but he did not include the introductory essay he had once written for Laughlin. Instead of comparing Quevedo's style with that of Gertrude Stein and
other moderns, Williams compared Quevedo to traditional satirists such as Aristophanes, Rabelais, Swift, and Byron during his writing of *Don Juan*. Instead of presenting the various satiric devices used by Quevedo, devices similar to his own techniques in *Paterson*, Williams presented a brief sketch of Quevedo's life and then devoted the remainder of the introduction to a memoir of his mother and her assistance in making the translation. By 1954, Williams was not as eager to identify his own poem with the satiric work he had tried so hard to publish during the years he wrote the first four books of *Paterson*. The satiric aspect of his poem seemed less important than it once had appeared. From the top of the literary ladder, his long poem began to look somewhat different than it had when he stood on the lower rungs.

Like the first four books, Book Five went through several changes before it became a reality and like the first four books, Book Five included materials representing Williams' various changing views. It was another polyglot, another collage, and it gradually became the overview and evaluation of his entire poem, the final panel in a vast autobiographical tapestry. Book Five provides the denouement of Williams' personal fiction, an irreverent summing up of his own position in the world of art.

Williams began thinking about a fifth book of *Paterson* within a year of the time Book Four was published. Even as he wrote to Robert Lowell defending the role played by
Phyllis and Corydon in Book Four, he speculated about a fifth book which might include all he had learned concerning "the line" and which would focus on Allen Ginsberg. In 1953 and 1954, he worked on a manuscript for Book Five featuring the triadic line he had first used in *Paterson Two*, a line he had come to associate with a final conception of what his poetry should be. Though the manuscript became sidetracked into a tribute to his wife and was eventually published as "Asphodel that Greeny Flower," Williams composed more than a third of his fifth book in the same sort of three-step line. He also began to associate that line with the "variable foot," a term which first appears in his writing around 1954. Book Five includes ample demonstration of this newly named poetic device and concludes with a celebration of the poet's ability to measure.

In 1956, while working with Edith Heal to compile a bibliography of his publications, Williams spoke of still another concept he wanted to embody in his fifth book. He spoke of the reason an old man creates art, "a piece of art that will go beyond him into the lives of young people." Thus, in addition to his personal conception of the poetic line, the new book would stress his age and his concerns for the new generation of writers. By direct statement, by including their writing as part of his poem, and by demonstration, Williams would again address the next generation of poets. In September of 1958, Laughlin gave a party not
only to celebrate the publication of Book Five but also to celebrate Williams' seventy-fifth birthday, the birthday of an older poet who wanted to leave a poetic inheritance for the young.  

Williams was by then a celebrated author who had written over forty-five books of prose, fiction, drama and poetry, the acknowledged leader of an entire new generation of young American writers. The first four books of Paterson had been read and studied both by critics and by Williams' younger followers. Paterson had been included in comprehensive studies of modern poetry along with works by Eliot, Pound, Crane and other major poets. Though many writers about Paterson still confessed confusion regarding some segments of the poem, particularly the prose, most were ready to ignore those portions which didn't fit a particular theory or to chalk them up to the "irrational" as Williams himself had encouraged Sister Bernetta Quinn to do in her study of The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry.  

As more and more critics sought to explicate Paterson, Williams began to interpret the poem in terms of their critical theories as well as according to his own early concepts. He praised those who wrote favorably of Paterson, even professing in several instances that they had uncovered his own subconscious motives. By 1954, however, he seemed almost too eager to explain away some of the prose segments which relate primarily to a satiric
level such as the quotation from Hipponax at the end of Book One which Williams had once called his "final footnote to the entire poem." 10 His letters to critics about that time suggest that Williams decided to deemphasize the satire of others before Book Five was published even though satiric fragments similar to those in the first four books appear in early manuscripts. When Book Five did appear, Pound and Cummings were represented by what Williams saw as their current reputations and were defended either implicitly or explicitly. Though Eliot remained the butt of Williams' concluding satire, the allusions to Eliot were overshadowed by the half-joking portrait Williams drew of himself. The allegory in Book Five centers not on other poets, but on Williams, who portrays himself as a rebellious unicorn calmed by women, an old man resurrected through his art and his love of women, the chief performer in his own satyr play.

Satire directed against others may have seemed petty now that Williams was sharing honors with the very poets he had satirized. From the top of the literary ladder, Williams could see his own position with the same exaggerated humor he had applied to others earlier in his poem. By casting himself as major player in a comic yet semiserious adaptation of a medieval allegory, Williams could celebrate his own work even as he smiled at the elaborate celebration. Williams chose an allegory which originally centered around Christ, the God born of a virgin. By giving
the allegory an autobiographical twist, he focused the story on himself, the poet constantly reborn through the ministrations of women, all women, virgin, whore and lesbian alike, a combined muse-like extension of Beautiful Thing.

Book Five is dedicated "To the Memory of Henri Toulouse Lautrec,/ Painter" (206). In Book Five, Williams associates his long poem mainly with the work of artists: artists like Lautrec and Brueghel who concerned themselves with the spirited lower classes of their own times, artists who had discovered ways to break through various constricting traditions, and finally those unknown medieval artists who created the realistically detailed and courtly Unicorn Tapestries, the single art work which dominates Book Five. Williams also relates a good deal of the art in Book Five to women. Lautrec had painted the whores who danced and drank in the cabarets of Paris. Whores in Book Five represent a generous giving aspect of womanhood which Williams praises. The virgin or young maiden who tames and captures the fabulous beast in the Unicorn Tapestries represents an opposing aspect of women, the reserved but still desiring woman who is fulfilled in marriage and also the Virgin Mary who gave birth to Christ. By becoming the unicorn, Williams elevates himself to an allegorical position once reserved for Christ even as he humanizes the virgin by revealing her kinship to the whore. Williams also celebrates a woman he considered half-man
when he honors Sappho, the Greek poetess of love, the lesbian whose love poem to another woman is carefully translated into American cadences by Williams. In modern guise, she becomes a muse of his second section inspiring Williams to write his own contemporary love lyric. Book Five celebrates women and art, man's source of inspiration and his hope of immortality.

Although it is shorter, Book Five is divided into three sections like the earlier four books. Williams deftly organizes each section around a particular purpose even as he includes fragments which relate to the overall collage created in earlier books. His dedication to Toulouse Lautrec derives from and relates back to an association of his own Beautiful Thing with Lautrec's women in Book Three, an association made when Williams didn't contemplate a fifth book. In Book Three, Beautiful Thing smells "like a whore" (105) and must purify herself by bathing in Paterson's opinions. Men marry Beautiful Thing only to destroy her privately just as they destroy the whore publicly. Because he is among these men, Paterson can be compared to Lautrec:

An insane god
--nights in a brothel
And if I had .
What then?

--made brothels my home?
(Toulouse Lautrec again. . ) (110)
Williams also returns to Book Three for the dominant theme of Book Five. In Book Three, Paterson had associated Beautiful Thing not only with a whore and a wife but also with the "docile queen" (126) of the Unicorn Tapestries. In Book Five, he elaborates on the tapestries, demonstrating their surface portrayal of reality but also playing on the allegorical interpretation of the story they tell—the story of a unicorn tamed by a maiden. The medieval story was woven into a series of tapestries produced to celebrate the marriage of Anne of Brittany to King Louis XII of France. The story of a fabulous beast caught only by the ministrations of a maiden was flattering to Anne, for it associated her with a medieval allegory of the Incarnation. During the Middle Ages, the unicorn became a symbol for Christ and the maiden a symbol for the Virgin Mary. In the tapestries, a wild unicorn is attacked by hunters, one of which represents the Angel Gabriel, is wounded, and is then subdued by a maiden and brought to the castle of King Louis and Queen Anne. Finally, the unicorn rests, wounded but unsuffering, in a meadow of flowers, within a circular enclosure which represents the enclosed garden of Mary's virginity. He is tied with the golden chain of marriage to a tree bearing pomegranates, symbol of fertility. Although the allegory is complicated, the story is graphically portrayed in realistic detail in the tapestries. Not only does Williams introduce the tapestries in his first section, but he also focuses on the importance of reality in
any form of art. Reality for Williams, however, must incorporate a realistic view of the virgin's story and must identify her even with the whore.

During the first section, the whore and virgin are major images, images Williams also associates with art. As early as the second page, Williams introduces a series of virginal women who provoke love and often marry at an early age: "the young girl/ no more than a child" in Lorca's The Love of Don Perlimplin, "Juliet," who married at age 13, and "Beatrice 9 when Dante first saw her." These young women remind Williams of "the wedding night's promiscuity in the girl's mind . . . a moral gesture if there ever was one" (208). Williams uses the famous young women, however, as a lead-in to the passage which unites virgin and whore, associates them with the unicorn's virility and relates the unicorn to Paterson, who has "returned to the old scenes" searching for immortality. The passage begins with a comparison of the virgin and the whore:

The moral

    proclaimed by the whorehouse
    could not be better proclaimed
    by the virgin, a price on her head,
    her maidenhead!
    sharp practice
    to hold on to that
    cheapening it:
    Throw it away! (as she did) (208)

Williams adds a touch of bawdy comedy as he introduces the unicorn which "thrashes about/ root, toot a toot!"

Though in part aroused by the whore-like virgin, the beast
also frolicks to draw attention to itself, to call "for its own murder." In retrospect, the unicorn's rebellious attitude is a sly suggestion that Williams is courting trouble just as the unicorn almost asks to be attacked by the hunting hounds. Although Paterson first becomes the unicorn in this passage, his transformation is subordinated to references which fully establish Paterson as Williams. Paterson has returned to learn "What has happened since Soupault gave him the novel/ the Dadaist novel/ to translate" (209). The reference leaves no doubt that Paterson and the unicorn are Williams himself who had translated Soupault's novel The Last Nights in Paris in 1929 and who recalled as late as 1954 that the book was "about a very wonderful little French whore, very intellectual, exotic, strange... contradictory, amusing." Paterson, now definitely established as Williams, receives letters in Book Five addressed to "Dear Bill" and "Dear Dr. Williams."

Although Williams associates himself with the world of Lautrec and Soupault, he also finds in that world the introduction to a major theme in Book Five:

A WORLD OF ART
THAT THROUGH THE YEARS HAS
SURVIVED! (209)

From this point on, Williams celebrates both reality and the imagination as they contribute to art. He presents the reality of the whore's world as well as the reality of the virgin's world. He also adapts the imaginative allegory of
the unicorn tapestries to his own literary allegory, recognizing that though it is a fiction, it is also a valid psychological reality.

Many segments of Williams' long poem had been praised by critics for their realistic description, their sense of immediacy. Several segments which had been panned, however, were related to a different kind of reality, the psychological reality that produces allegory, the desire of the writer to present his deepest feelings disguised in story. Williams' choice of the medieval unicorn tapestries combines both the reality of minute detail which makes even individual varieties of flowers identifiable in the tapestry with the reality of a deeply embedded religious allegory. The tapestries thus provide an ideal analogy for Williams' long poem which is also filled with realistic details even as it presents a deeply felt literary allegory. Furthermore, the tapestries are housed in The Cloisters, a museum located in New York; thus, the art world of Book Five becomes a logical progression from Corydon's sophisticated New York attempt at the art of poetry in Book Four.

Williams also ties the museum back to his earliest central image of the rock, an image associated both with his own anthropomorphic creation of Paterson and with his mockery of Eliot's rock symbolism:

--the museum became real
The Cloisters--
on its rock
casting its shadow—
"la realite! la realite!
la rea, la rea, la realite!"

(209)

Williams had already poked fun at the rock imagery in Eliot's *Waste Land* and the later full blown rock symbolism associated with the church in Eliot's religious pageant, *The Rock*. The prelude to Williams' discovery at The Cloisters is as significant as the familiar passage from *The Waste Land* which it echoes:

(Come in under the shadow of this red rock)
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.14

The shadow cast by the rock on which The Cloisters actually stands provides not a fearful prophecy but an image of the reality both within and without. The shadow is an actual image of the museum, but the museum houses the French or Flemish tapestries and their medieval allegory which Williams recreates and updates. There is a particular irony in Williams returning to the medieval period for his major theme, for the medieval period produced both Dante, Eliot's literary hero and chosen mentor, and Chaucer, the comic allegorist who set the metrical pattern for English literature and who lurks behind Williams' earliest and latest conceptions of his long poem. In the third section of Book Five, where Williams most distorts the medieval allegory to coincide with his own history, he also incorporates a line from The Prologue to *The*
Canterbury Tales, a suggestion that Chaucer's human comedy had infiltrated the austere medieval story Williams deliberately recreates.

Each time Williams reverts to a reference from the past, he also juxtaposes a modern illustration or artifact to remind his readers that his own book is a modern story, not a medieval tale. A contemporary letter from "Josie" follows the ironic reference to The Cloisters. The letter is filled with details about a summer day at her farm but also refers to another kind of reality, the reality caught in recorded memories: "How lovely to read your memories of the place; a place is made of memories as well as the world around it" (210). Williams' long poem is filled with memories both of Paterson the place and Paterson the man, the mythical man-city, the poet struggling among other poets to assert his own views. One of these views is a place in poetry for every kind of artistic reality, "the whore and the virgin, an identity" (210).

After Williams has again reverted to the past, a letter from Allen Ginsberg returns the reader to the present and also deals with reality, this time Ginsberg's concept of reality. Ginsberg is about to leave "for the North Pole" but wants Williams to know he has "NOT absconded from Paterson" and that greater experience will lead to a fuller appreciation of his own home territory. He knows how all such experience contributes to his own conception of beauty. For Ginsberg, "Beauty is where I hang my hat. And
reality. And America" (213). After Ginsberg's letter, Williams again introduces his central theme, this time as a question with its own answer:

--- the virgin and the whore, which most endures? the world of the imagination most endures:

Pollock's blobs of paint squeezed out with design!
pure from the tube. Nothing else is real.

WALK in the world (you can't see anything from a car window, still less from a plane, or from the moon!? Come off of it.) (213)

The plea here is for a reality much like that proposed so frequently by Wallace Stevens, a reality firmly based in the world but touched also by the artistic imagination. It is tempting to believe that Williams recognized his growing affinity with Stevens by 1958 and one line does suggest that he may have seen his literary allegory in terms related to Stevens as he prepared the final book. Near the end of Book Five, Williams admonishes his readers, "I have told you, this/ is a fiction, pay attention" (236). Paterson is indeed Williams' personal supreme fiction, a fiction filled with the physical reality of his city but also the psychological realities of his own identity among poets, realities created in part by his own imagination and embodied in allegory.

The final touch of reality in the first section comes in a selection from a short story written by Gilbert
Sorrentino, one of Williams' young admirers who, like Ginsberg, sent him manuscripts for examination and commentary. In this excerpt, the virgin and whore are brought together within the text as Sorrentino describes a whorehouse where the whore resembles a virgin. Williams juxtaposes the letter to his own poetic description of the virgin from the Unicorn Tapestries and thus again pulls together two realities—the modern whorehouse and the medieval tapestries.

The first section closes with one last look at the virgin and the whore, this time a recollection of the girl who went "in swimming naked with the boys, among whom, of course was her brother, a satyr if there ever was one, to beat anybody up who presumed to molest her" (216). The memory is of a day long gone "before she turned whore and got syphilis," yet the woman's character is neither degraded nor judged. Rather, the prose paragraph leads Williams to speculate that "the times today/ are safer for the fornicators," and leaves him free to encourage sexuality without "fear of venereal disease." The section closes with a humorous reference to Remy de Gourmont's theory that the sex organs are linked closely to the intellect, a theory which had caught Pound's fancy some thirty-five years earlier and which Pound had probably passed on to Williams. At age 75, Williams still found the theory worthy of a chuckle and a proper comic conclusion for the opening section of his fifth book:
"Loose your love to flow"
while you are yet young
male and female
(if it is worth it to you)
'c'ha cha cha
you'd think the brain
'd be grafted
on a better root (216)

The ribald conclusion and the insistence of linking virgin with whore make Paterson himself something of a satyr like the boy in the last prose fragment. Throughout the section, women are celebrated for their sexuality more than for their symbolism, and the symbolism which adheres to the virgin is undermined. As usual Williams had good reason for undermining the traditional symbolism associated with the virgin and as usual, part of the reason was a spoof of Eliot.

It is no accident that Book Five begins with Paterson as an old man startled into reverie by a woman's forehead. In the opening of "Ash Wednesday," Eliot's poem in celebration of the Virgin Mary, Eliot dramatizes himself as a penitent yet also assumes the mask of an old man who ironically questions, "Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?" Eliot's answer and spiritual transformation comes partially through a series of women who symbolize spiritual qualities. Parodying Eliot's timid eagle, Williams compares his own mind to a rebellious eagle inspired by a series of flesh and blood women. He also arranges his opening lines to simulate the bird's flight.
In old age
the mind
casts off
rebelliously
an eagle
from its crag

--the angle of a forehead
or far less
makes him remember when he thought
he had forgot (207)

Before the book is over, this seemingly modest provocation of a woman's face will expand as Paterson develops into a ribald and still potent satyr-like figure who reminds himself near the end of the book, "Paterson, keep your pecker up, whatever the detail!" (235) The physical imagery throughout Book Five counters Eliot's asceticism in "Ash Wednesday" and reinforces Williams' cry throughout Paterson for both physical and artistic fertility. It also distinguishes Williams' entire poem from Eliot's body of poetry, for Williams clearly insists that his poem is "NOT prophecy!" (208), an assertion Eliot never could have made.

Williams had more than a spoof of "Ash Wednesday" and Eliot in mind, however, when he chose to demolish the traditional symbolism of the virgin. Throughout Paterson, he had been building his own symbolic woman, Beautiful Thing, the representation in early manuscripts of language but later also an embodiment of an entire new perspective toward American culture. Yet Beautiful Thing also has been portrayed as a real woman, the beautiful but scarred black servant who provides a new image for reverenced womanhood. In Book Five, Williams continues to expand his female
figure as he casts her in the role of the muse who inspires artists toward new discoveries in depicting reality.

In the second section, Williams suggests art from both the past and present which achieves a new approach to reality, includes two pieces of writing from Pound and Cummings which have their own kind of reality and expresses highlights of his own poetics by associating his art with the art of others by demonstration, by implication and by explanation.

The second section opens with an excerpt from the letter of a Greek scholar to whom Williams had written concerning his translation of the poem by Sappho which he also includes. Translation is one way an older art work can be transformed for a modern American reader. Williams chose to translate the poem Sappho addressed to another woman, the poem which most supports the historical view of Sappho as a lesbian. Williams thus humanizes, by extension, his lesbian Corydon, whose authenticity he had defended in letters but whose humanity had hardly been revealed in Book Four. Like the whore and the virgin who dominate Book Five, Sappho is another passionate woman who attracts Williams. In one manuscript, he included her with the virgin and whore, but he later removed the reference. Instead, he addresses her modern-day counterpart in his own exquisite love lyric which appears just a few pages after the poem by Sappho.
Williams' love lyric celebrates an unknown woman he has spotted on a street in Paterson, a woman who stopped him in his tracks and who becomes immortal in his poem. Although her mannish dress identifies her with the lesbian Sappho, the flower "pinned flat to her/ right/ breast" relates her to all the women who are also flowers in Paterson. At the end of the lyric, Williams turns her into a modern muse when he asks, "Have you read anything that I have written? It is all for you." She joins the virgin and the whore to become an extended version of Beautiful Thing, the woman who can be language, land and muse to art in turn but who is also always embodied in a flesh and blood woman.

Williams apparently never intended that his woman would be a consistent symbol at all, and he uses Book Five to indicate this. When he makes her a muse and dedicates his poem to her, he begins seriously enough but swerves into humor by adding that his poem has also been written for "the birds/ or Mezz Mezzrow/ . . . or the Satyrs" (221). In much traditional poetry, birds represent nature or the poet's singing voice. "For the birds," however, was a slang expression prevalent in the fifties which Williams would have known and which is implied by his syntax. A love poem written in part for the birds serves to undercut undue seriousness in the address to his muse. Furthermore, his love poem is also written for Mezz Mezzrow, a jazz musician whose autobiography is filled with colloquial
American at its best. Williams includes an excerpt in which Mezzrow calls jazz "the most original and honest music in America" and identifies his own peculiarly American muse as "inspiration's mammy," an expression which no doubt appealed to Williams.

Most important of Williams' muses, however, are the Satyrs, those animal-like males so famed for their lechery, characters who first appeared in the Greek satyr plays. In fact, Williams goes on to call his poem "a pre-tragic play/a satyric play!" He also asserts, "All plays/were satyric when they were most devout," and then qualifies his use of devout by adding "Ribald as a Satyr." At the Greek Dionysian festivals, the satyr play was presented with three tragic plays, but the satyr play was designed to treat an heroic legend in the spirit of burlesque. When Williams calls all he has written a satyric play, he reveals his earliest purposes and also ties the final book to that same satiric purpose. As a mock-epic, his personal odyssey is a burlesque of traditional approaches to poetry and simultaneously a satire on the modern literary scene, yet is is also a devout presentation of his own poetics. Williams probably decided to revive overt reference to his satiric emphasis when he decided to turn the satiric spotlight on himself in Book Five.

After calling his writing a satyr play, Williams continues by associating some of his favorite artists in a satiric dance, a dance that includes artists who have in
one way or another created a new reality and who have simultaneously succeeded in mocking an older tradition. The dance is part of Williams' dream world with centaurs which begin the dream by "leading to rout of the vocables," the clamor of sound "in the writings of Gertrude Stein." Though her writing may seem inept to some, it is a sophisticated attempt to make the sounds of words impart a kind of sense which the words themselves do not necessarily convey. Stein's writing is as sophisticated as the childlike figures painted by Paul Klee. Both artists break with tradition to search for a new reality that began with earlier artists who sought to probe the mysteries of life by unusual artistic techniques: "Durer/ with his Melancholy" and the "shattered masonry" that added to the mood of his work; Leonardo de Vinci, who mocked traditional portraiture "in La Gioconda," Hieronymus Bosch, with his "congeries of tortured souls and devils who preyed on them"--all these Williams relates to modern psychology and to modern art, to the work of Freud, Picasso and Juan Gris. It is from these figures that Williams draws inspiration in his search for a new poetics to express a new reality.

Williams describes a new reality emerging from the blockage of tradition which had dominated art as the twentieth century began, the kind of blockage which is always broken by major new creative talent.
we know
that a stasis
from a chrysalis
has stretched its wings
like a bull
or a Minotaur
or Beethoven
in the scherzo
from the Fifth Symphony
stomped
his heavy feet (223)

Williams' own contribution to the new reality is both
in language and in viewpoint. The very words he chooses
and the lines which assert their rhythms are suggestive of
the spoken language. In content, he is unwilling to accept
traditional poetic concepts without adding the ironically
real situation which requires a clear statement of the
actual. Though the variable foot allows the spoken lan-
guage to be arranged rhythmically, a readiness to accept
and even celebrate life with its deformities must charac-
terize the new poet's viewpoint. The passage that opened
with Williams' revelation of his work as a satyr play
closes with a demonstration of the traditionally beautiful
poetic image of love adapted to a harrowing yet courageous
illustration of a different kind of love. Notice how the
image of love moves from the beautiful to the terrible
without presenting a real situation but how the illustra-
tion moves from the terrible to the beautiful even as it
preserves the actual facts.

I saw love
mounted naked on a horse
on a swan
the tail of a fish
  the bloodthirsty conger eel
      and laughed
recalling the Jew
  in the pit
      among his fellows
when the indifferent chap
  with the machine gun
      was spraying the heap .
he had not yet been hit
      but smiled
comforting his companions
      comforting
      his companions (223)

The gradually deteriorating images of love cannot
evoke either the callous horror or the heroic human spirit
which the actual events inspire. The poignancy of the pas­
sage depends instead on the gradual building of the event
in a series of lines which require about equal emphasis and
the division of the third from last line into two lines for
emphatic repetition.

In Book Three, Williams had complained that there was
no language to express the heroism of the Marines who
fought at Iwo Jima. By Book Five, Williams believed he had
developed a poetics which provided a formal vehicle for
American speech rhythms and could be effectively used with
imaginative imagery but without traditional symbolism. By
concluding the dream which began as an association of art­
ists who have sought new ways to portray reality with a
demonstration of how his own poetics achieve a new reality,
Williams becomes a major figure in poetic theory, even if
only in his dreams.
Williams does not resort to dreams, however, to conclude his portraits of Pound and Cummings. In the second section, he allows Pound to speak, or more accurately, rant for himself and winds up his view of Cummings in a fragment of transcript from a radio interview.

During the period Williams worked on Book Five, Pound was also hard at work writing more Cantos and spreading his usual propaganda. From behind the walls of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Pound continued to write, receive visitors, and agitate friends in relation to a variety of literary, political and economic causes. Williams steadfastly refused to become involved in any of Pound's schemes. He wrote to Pound in 1954 refusing an offer he might have welcomed ten years earlier: 21

Dear Ez: Ain't it enuf that you so deeply influenced my formative years without your wanting to influence also my later ones? A united front against the goons from the "academy" might be an attractive program but, frankly, interests me at the present time almost not at all.

By the time Williams wrote this letter, he numbered among his own friends several of the academy people Pound may have wanted to attack; Williams had made peace with the academics. Also by 1954, the prevailing critical opinion regarding Pound's influence on Paterson was that Williams had championed his old friend's economic views to the detriment of the poem. No one viewed Pound as one of the heroic characters in Williams' life-sized autobiographical collage even though Pound had appeared in several guises.
throughout the poem. When Williams chose a cranky letter written by Pound in 1956 and containing the usual vituperation about politics, economics and war for publication in Book Five, he knew it would be misunderstood, but he also knew it completed the portrait of a giant who had played a major role in Williams' own life and in the poem depicting his life. In the late fifties, however, the giant who had once loomed so heavily over Williams seemed reduced to something of an incoherent babbler. Williams told Pound his political and economic ideas were "clear as mud" in a reply to the letter he would use in Paterson even as he also admitted, "You have been of assistance to the world as a recorder of facts and I respect and really love you for it." 

In Book Five, Pound's letter presents only a sad revelation of the sort of unworthy thinking which had put one of the greatest poets of the period into an insane asylum. The letter's juxtaposition to Williams' own translation of Sappho's poem is a reminder to the reader of Pound's gigantic contribution to the art of poetry translation and to poetry, a far cry from his incoherent political and economic ramblings.

Williams' conclusion of Cummings' portrait also derives in part from Williams' own view of Cummings' career and in part from the public perception of it. In the manuscript of an article prepared for Art Digest in late 1954, Williams wrote, "Cummings is celebrated after all for the
unconventionality of this punctuation and phrasing. You cannot mistake his page to have been written in anything but the American dialect." Williams concludes the second section of Book Five with the transcription of part of a radio interview during which he was asked to define poetry. As part of the discussion, he is presented with a particularly difficult and obscure section of a poem by E. E. Cummings and asked if he considers it a poem. He answers that it is not a poem to him, but it may be to its author. In addition to elucidating Williams' own poetic theory, the interview provides a windup on Cummings similar to the windup on Pound. Cummings, too, has practiced his linguistic tricks in areas unworthy of his best work. Williams may well be implying that each poet must be allowed to play with language in any way he chooses if he is ultimately to use language to produce important work. He also may jokingly imply that the world is all too ready to judge a man by his trivia instead of by his major work.

In the early forties, when Williams was first planning Paterson, he believed Pound and Cummings were the two poets who had most to contribute in the use of the American language. Fifteen years later, neither poet had gone nearly as far as Williams in providing anything very new in metrical theory and only Pound had used the American idiom as effectively as Williams. Although Williams includes his final portraits of both Pound and Cummings in the section which celebrates artistic breakthroughs, it is obvious that
he feels the two earlier heroes have diminished and he himself has made more of a breakthrough than any other poet.

In one early manuscript for Book Five, Williams considered trying to wind up his portrait of Pound and Cummings by a call to "reverse the deaths" of Patch and Cumming even as he tied them to the idea of his satiric play. 25

never forget this
when you balance poised on the bridge or
at the brink of the falls - Sam Patch - though
in her haste Mrs. Cummings did forget it.

- all poems are satyric even when they
are most devout: reverse the deaths!
Tragedy is a play! there is no sense to art
otherwise. Unless we play, unless it is a play
we are not serious

When we play

we are most serious

most devout

satyric!
Ribald as a satyr

In the early draft, Sarah Cumming has an "s" at the end of her name, an error which would have needed correcting had Williams decided to use the passage but also an error showing how fully he associated her with Cummings. The passage suggests that Williams was trying to justify his satire as a way of preventing literary deaths among the new poets similar to those of Pound and Cummings. When he omitted the passage and left in only the ambiguous prose selections, he was probably not really sure exactly where
Pound and Cummings would eventually be placed in any final literary evaluation.

Whatever comment Williams wishes to make about Pound and Cummings, the comments he makes about his own work certainly apply to his long poem. For Williams, "anything is good material for poetry," and modern poets must strive for more than the sense that is found in prose. Poetry is "language charged with emotion. It's words rhythmically organized ..." and the organization must be "a sample of the American idiom" (225). These are the components by which Williams hopes to achieve the new reality he seeks throughout Paterson.

In Book Five, however, Williams does far more than describe the basic tenets of his poetry. In the third section he also demonstrates how an artist can apply his own imagination to a body of material to recreate an old story and give it a new dimension, to mix fiction with reality. He begins with a nativity scene painted by Brueghel, then shifts to his own adaptation of the Incarnation and Resurrection portrayed in the Unicorn Tapestries. His own interpretation of the tapestries is as individual as Brueghel's interpretation of the nativity. Williams places himself at the center of the tapestry story and includes just enough satire directed at his old enemy Eliot to tie the humorous self-portrait to the entire literary allegory of Paterson.
The third section begins with a minute description of Brueghel's "Adoration of the Kings" which Williams calls "a Nativity" and characterizes as the painting of "a baby/ new born!/ among the words." "Among the words" is a particularly apt phrase because it captures the Biblical metaphor of Christ as the "word made flesh," a metaphor Eliot had also incorporated in one stanza of "Ash Wednesday." In Brueghel's depiction, the baby is also born among the words of gossiping soldiers and peasants who make Joseph, the "potbellied greybeard," the "butt of their comments" (226). The gossips are not concerned with any mystery of virgin birth but rather with the simple fact that three crowned men have brought valuable gifts to this somewhat scandalous scene of a young mother and much older father with their newborn child:

-- -- incredulous
that there was so much fuss
about such a simple thing as a baby
born to an old man
out of a girl and a pretty girl
at that (227)

Williams salutes "the man Brueghel who painted/ what he saw--/ many times no doubt/ among his own kids but not of course/ in this setting)" (226). To Williams, Brueghel saw the scene as an artist who could pull together his own knowledge of the world around him and the Biblical story, an artist who "saw it/ from the two sides" (228).

The nativity scene is followed by two prose selections which comment on a lack of dignity among the modern working
classes as compared to Brueghel's peasants. A few passages later, a friend Edward writes of a modern mother and child and ties their lack of dignity to debased government. In the midst of this prose, Williams also includes Biblical passages presenting the story of Christ's Immaculate Conception, but he challenges the story with his own insistence that "no woman is virtuous / who does not give herself to her lover / — forthwith" (229). The entire opening focuses the reader's attention on the birth of Christ and various implications of the way that birth has been portrayed before Williams usurps the place of Christ in the unicorn tapestry allegory.

The denouement of Williams' allegory begins with a way of viewing Book Five as part of the same poem Williams had first characterized in the Preface as "just another dog / among a lot of dogs." Book Five, however, is a shorter version inspired by Williams' composite woman, the virgin who is simultaneously whore and who represents all women in the poem:

Paterson has grown older
the dog of his thoughts

has shrunk
to no more than "a passionate letter"
to a woman, a woman he had neglected
to put to bed in the past . (230)

Williams' neglect in putting his woman to bed relates back to Paterson's earlier failure with Phyllis but also to the journalistic term of putting a paper to bed.
Throughout *Paterson*, Williams' women have been related to his approach to language, his life work. He excuses himself for not putting the issue to rest in part because he has been busy trying "to get the young/ to foreshorten/ their errors in the use of words..." By becoming the unicorn of the tapestries and by offering what Williams believed in 1953 would be his final comment on language, he could at last put his woman and his search for language to bed.

Williams accomplishes the leap from poet concerned with the young to penned unicorn by beginning with an image of himself "tending his flower/ garden" which later becomes an image of "the unicorn against a millefleurs background." The image recalls the image of women as flowers which recurs throughout *Paterson*.

Before continuing to build on his identity as unicorn, Williams meditates on the birds and flowers so meticulously woven into the unicorn tapestries. Though he claims they teach him "how to avoid/ the irreverent," he also sees them "woven in his mind eating and . . ./ all together for his purposes" (232). Although one purpose is to recreate in words the reality of detail in the pictorial representation of the tapestries, Williams' major purpose is to relate the allegory of the tapestries to his own overall literary allegory in *Paterson*. To do this, Williams uses a technique of free association, a series of thoughts provoked by both the details and the story portrayed in the Unicorn
Tapestries. Though Williams realizes he has become an old man, his age is obscured by the more powerful image of himself as Paterson, the unicorn in captivity:

---the aging body
with the deformed great-toe nail
makes itself known
coming to search me out---with a rare smile
among the thronging flowers of that field
where the Unicorn is penned by a low wooden fence
in April! (232)

The reference to April is double-edged, for it suggests both the risen Christ of Easter as symbolized in the medieval allegory and an echo from *The Waste Land* which has appeared several times in *Paterson*. By choosing April as the "cruelest month" when man is reminded he has lost his myths of resurrection and rebirth, Eliot had added substantially to his desolate picture of modern life. Williams, however, plays with the month of April to introduce a personal experience which he then twists into a mystical experience, an experience he immediately undercuts.

For Williams, April becomes "the same month" during his childhood when a snake was dug up and killed. His insane Uncle Godwin had told him "its tail/ would not stop wriggling till/ after the sun/ goes down—" Williams sees the snake and Godwin's supposed wisdom, however, as akin to the immortal serpent with "its tail in its mouth," a traditional symbol of life, continuity and eternity. Williams deftly turns the snake into his own river returning to its
beginnings, the "river that flows/ and encircles" from his Preface (5), the river that has tortured him into a moment when he can look back to a time he felt mystical enlighten­ment by Godwin's knowledge: "I knew all (or enough)/ it became me" (223). Williams' recollection of the enlight­ened moment, however, is ironic. Such a sense of enlight­enment belongs to an heroic era, an era when the insane could be thought to know everything, an era when myths of all sorts were still believable. For the mid-twentieth century, however, "the times are not heroic." Neither his insane Uncle Godwin nor Williams himself can profess to know all even though Williams suggests a continuity from past to present in his poem.

Williams' thoughts next turn to a direct association of the unicorn with Christ, the "god of love," but Williams again humorously twists the material to suit his own pur­poses as he substitutes erotic love for the traditional Christian love. Williams, as Paterson, the fleshly lover, usurps the place of Christ, and the tapestry allegory shifts to stress the autobiographical allegory of Paterson, the long poem.

The Unicorn roams the forest of all true lovers' minds. They hunt it down. Bow wow! sing hey the green holly!

--every married man carries in his head the beloved and sacred image of a virgin whom he has whored but the living fiction a tapestry
silk and wool shot with silver threads
   a milk-white one-horned beast
       I, Paterson, the King-self
saw the lady
   through the rough woods
       outside the palace walls
among the stench of sweating horses
   and gored hounds
       yelping with pain
the heavy breathing pack
   to see the dead beast
       brought in at last
across the saddlebow
   among the oak trees.
       Paterson,
keep your pecker up
   whatever the detail!
   Anywhere is everywhere:
You can learn from poems
   that an empty head tapped on
       sounds hollow
in any language! The figures
   are of heroic size. (234-235)

As the "King-self" in this passage, Paterson sees a
composite of all his women in Paterson and identifies them
as the virgin he has whored, a tie-in with his earlier
theme of the virgin and the whore, but also a realistic
revision of Eliot's virgin in "Ash Wednesday." It is not,
however, "the lady" alone who inspires Paterson to keep his
"pecker up." Williams' image of potency is closely related
to "the dead beast/ brought in at last/ across the saddle
bow...," for this is not only the hound killed by the
unicorn but also the dead hound that completes the dog
image in Paterson. The hound represents all those poems
Williams has killed by ridicule, particularly poems by
Eliot. To stress the association with Eliot, Williams
offers his own particular version of two lines by Eliot.
In "Ash Wednesday," Eliot had asserted that "time is always
time/ and place is always and only place." For Williams, a locality becomes universal just as any particular piece of art can be given universal dimensions. Williams repudiates Eliot by insisting "Anywhere is everywhere" and then expanding to insist that "an empty head tapped on/ sounds hollow/ in any language!" Not only do Williams' lines recall Eliot's white leopards in "Ash Wednesday" feeding on "that which had been contained/ in the hollow round of my skull," but they also echo earlier word plays on "The Hollow Men" as well as the entire portrayal of Eliot as a hydrocephelic dwarf. Despite this digressive thrust at Eliot, however, Williams also insists of his own allegory, "The figures are of heroic size." Like Pound, Cummings, Crane, and Williams, Eliot has become a caricature of heroic dimensions.

As Williams continues to describe the sixth panel of the tapestries in greater detail, he again points out the various hounds that have participated in his own particular hunt.

A second beast is brought in wounded.
And a third, survivor of the chase,
lies down to rest a while,
his regal neck
fast in a jeweled collar.
A hound lies on his back eviscerated
by the beast's single horn.
Take it or leave it,
if the hat fits--
put it on. (235)
Some of the doggy poems in *Paterson* have only been wounded; some have survived Williams' chase and others have perished. Williams challenges his readers to make their own determination and "if the hat fits--/ put it on." In one manuscript, Williams regretted that he had killed so few of the poems he had satirized. The earlier version reads, "One of the dogs (I wish it had been more) lies eviscerated by the beast's horn."  

It is important to notice that Williams' allegory is incorporated into a minute description of selected details from the tapestries. These details can serve as another illustration of Williams' assertion that the artist must pay attention to the reality of his work as well as to its other meanings. Williams chooses his tapestry details with the same care he had used in selecting details from history and the local landscape in his first four books. In Book Five, however, Williams interrupts a minute description of the flowers which surround the penned unicorn with a parenthetical statement about his own unicorn story. The statement refers both to Book Five and to all of *Paterson*: "(I have told you, this/ is a fiction, pay attention)" (236).  

Though Williams' individual interpretation of the unicorn is indeed a fiction, as is the allegorical level of his entire long poem, he has prepared carefully to insure that the fiction has a victorious ending for himself. In the opening section of Book Five, Williams uses the unicorn as an image of the imagination as well as a representation
of himself. By embodying the imagination in art, the artist can cheat death and achieve immortality.

We shall not get to the bottom
death is a hole
in which we are all buried
Gentile and Jew.

The flower dies down
and rots away.
But there is a hole
in the bottom of the bag.

It is the imagination
which cannot be fathomed.
It is through this hole
we escape.

So through art alone, male and female, a field of flowers, a tapestry, spring flowers unequaled in loveliness.

Through this hole
at the bottom of the cavern
of death, the imagination escapes intact.

he bears a collar round his neck
hid in the bristling hair. (212)

Only when the unicorn who has cheated death becomes Williams himself does it become evident that Williams' fiction includes his own immortality by way of his long poem. Despite the comic aspects of Williams' interpretation of the Unicorn Tapestries, his comedy has a serious dimension.

Williams retains the delicate balance between comedy and seriousness as he concludes his poem. He closes his depiction of himself as unicorn with a return to his central theme of "the virgin and the whore,/ an identity" (237). This time, however, the virgin has been whored by a soldier and is related in an early manuscript to
Williams' English grandmother. In the final version, Williams does not pursue this early relationship but uses memories of his grandmother's death as a springboard for the concluding wisdom of his poem. When Emily Dickinson Welcome died in 1920, she had told the younger Williams "The past is for those who lived in the past" (239) and "You young people/ think you know everything" (238). Williams answers her with the accumulated wisdom of his own lifetime as he begins the last passage of his long autobiographical poem:

--learning with age to sleep my life away: saying
The measure intervenes, to measure is all we know, a choice among the measures . .
the measured dance

"unless the scent of a rose startle us anew" (239)

During the writing of Paterson and the final years of his life, Williams was concerned with the discovery of a measure which could help poets use the American idiom. In his final passage, however, he adds to the importance of finding the right measure the importance of any given sensation which revitalizes, "the scent of a rose" that can "startle us anew." The passage is a capsule summary of his poetics, a poetics that calls for close attention to the surrounding world and the language used in that world. Though the statement is a serious one, Williams can also see the humor in any attempt by any poet to summarize all
that men may know. He makes light of his own summary even as he calls to mind two times when Eliot attempted to address the question of what men can know:

Equally laughable is to assume to know nothing, a chess game massively, "materially," compounded!

Yo ho! ta ho!

We know nothing and can know nothing but the dance, to dance to a measure contrapuntally, Satyrically, the tragic foot. (239)

Life is not "A Game of Chess" in which the players "know nothing... see nothing..." and "remember/Nothing" as Eliot had suggested it could be for many in the second section of The Waste Land. And though it is "the dance," it is not "only the dance" which Eliot had attempted to describe in Four Quartets:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless; Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is, But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity, Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards, Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point, There can be no dance, and there is only the dance. 33

The dance at Eliot's "still point" is one of mystical illumination, a moment both in and out of time when man briefly experiences the Incarnation. Williams uses the dance image both to recall the dance of the satyrs in his own dream of immortal artists and to tie his own discovery
of a new poetic measure to that satiric dance. Furthermore, his measure of both language and life run counter to Eliot's measures of language and life, yet the musical term "counterpoint" is particularly appropriate because it suggests that Williams' measures are as necessary as Eliot's for any kind of complete harmony. "Yo ho! Ta ho!" is the call of the hunt, the hunt for a unicorn who will survive and become immortal even as he dances counter and satirically to the man who seemed a literary immortal so much earlier in life. Williams' comic long poem is as necessary for a rounding out of modern poetry as the satyr-play was for the rounding out of the Greek cycle of tragedies. "The tragic foot," ironically, is the cloven foot of the satyr, the figure who signals Williams' victory over Eliot, a victory achieved with a new measure, an American measure, "the variable foot."

During the last several years of his life, Williams not only used but named and attempted to describe "the variable foot." In a 1962 interview, after a stroke had prevented him from writing and sometimes had affected his memory, Williams was still concerned with the new measure he had developed. Williams summarized his attitude when he was asked by the interviewer what he thought he had left of special value to the new poets. 34

The variable foot—the division of the line according to a new method that would be satisfactory to an American. It's all right if you are not intent on being national. But an American is forced to try to give the intonation. Either it is important or it is not
important. It must have occurred to an American that the question of the line was important. The American idiom has much to offer us that the English language has never heard of.

In 1950, when he was concluding Book Four, Williams used a metaphor which permeates Paterson to insist on the need for a particularly American idiom: "...for until we disabuse ourselves of the notion that English prosody is an inevitable and God-given rule for us as for the English, we shall remain impotent."\(^{35}\)

The emphasis on the need for fertility in Book Four and on Paterson's potency in Book Five both build on the metaphor Williams often used with reference to language. Not until around 1954, however, did Williams realize that during the composition of his long poem, he had discovered a line which could help him measure the American intonation. By 1954, he realized that the triadic line he had used in Paterson Two was essentially his own development of a poetic foot he could measure, the very device he was seeking. Thus, in Book Five, Paterson is a potent lover of his American world and American language, his virgin turned whore.

In June of 1955, Williams wrote to John Thirlwall about his discovery of the "variable foot" and traced the concern "for something wrong with our acceptance of verse forms handed down to us" from Phillip Freneau through Emerson and Poe.\(^{36}\) In this letter, he mentions Poe's uneasiness with "the structure of verse" and his "essay
about its mathematical implications." Poe's essay is "The Rationale of Verse," an essay Williams first read in the twenties when he wrote *In the American Grain*. In the essay, Poe wrote of the foolishness that pervaded books concerned with English prosody. As part of his thesis that fixed metrical systems are limiting, Poe discussed the need for assigning metrical values to syllables in relation to each other as they are used in the poetic line rather than in fixed quantities. It might well have been in Poe's essay that Williams first intuited the connections he later frequently made between the new mathematics of his own century and his attempts to develop a new poetic foot, the connections between Einstein's relativity theory and his own poetic discovery. What is certain is that Williams first found in Poe the term he eventually adopted for his poetic discovery, the "variable foot." 

Poe had used the term to describe the importance of a one-syllable caesura which he called a "variable foot" because it included a pause which gave the foot the same length as the iambuses which preceded and followed it. Williams used the term to describe the importance of measuring space within the poetic line. For Williams, "the variable foot is measured. But the spaces between the stresses, the rhythmical units, are variable." Williams called his own use of the variable foot a "certain loose pattern of verse, following three lines, allowing a certain relativistic foot." Williams believed that he and other
modernists were writing an "instinctive approximation of the principle of the relativistic or variable foot, which is at the base of all our striving." He also believed the device could be adapted by new poets to their own voices and the use of the American language because it was a relative measure rather than a fixed measure, a measure which required only a formal rhythm in the fixed stresses, a rhythm caught by the ear listening to the natural rhythms of the spoken language.

It was the discovery of the variable foot which finally convinced Williams of his major role in breaking through the stasis that he believed still afflicted some American poetry in the forties and early fifties. As a discoverer, he becomes the immortal unicorn and joins other artists who have participated in the satiric dance of discovery in Book Five.

By 1961, Williams had also decided that Pound was "the first who had used in his writing as a poet the American idiom." Williams wrote to tell this to Pound, who had returned to Italy after his 1958 release from St. Elizabeth's Hospital. Also in 1961, Williams began composing a few fragments for a possible sixth book of Paterson. The three dated fragments which are published with all editions of Paterson have three features in common with the earlier books: the same movement between levity and seriousness, a continuing diatribe against fixed poetics, and a major concern with history and economics, concerns most often
related to Pound in Paterson. There is too little text to predict what Williams might have aimed at in a sixth book, but his process in preparing the first five suggests that he would have maintained the ongoing balance between a serious poetics and a continuing portrayal of the literary giants who had played such a part in his autobiographical poem.

In the interview Williams gave in 1962 after his disabling stroke, Williams was reminded that one reviewer of Book Five had suggested there was no reason for such a poem as Paterson to ever end, that Part Four completed the cycle but Five renewed it. "Then what? inquired the interviewer. 43

"Go on repeating it," was Williams reply, followed by a reference to "the last part, the dance," the four final lines of Book Five which Williams insisted "has to be interpreted."

His interviewer didn't presume to interpret the lines but supposed the satyrs might "represent the element of freedom, of energy within the form."

Williams agreed that they did represent action and also linked them to the musical concept of counterpoint and to the idea of Indians beating time with their feet. He did not continue this theme of conversation, however, and changed the subject, explaining that it was too much for his "damaged brain." Williams never wrote any more on Paterson after the 1962 interview and never fully explained
the role of his satyrs, a part of his poem he felt still had to be interpreted. He did, however, maintain during the last years of his life that Paterson Five was part of the same poem as the other four books.

One of the critical controversies which began after publication of Book Five was whether the book was actually a part of Paterson or a separate poem. Many critics praised Book Five for a new lyrical quality which some even saw as a close approximation of iambic pentameter. With less prose than the earlier books, Paterson Five also appeared to be a more unified poem. Furthermore, Book Five is almost entirely personal. Paterson the city is nearly abandoned in favor of Paterson the man, and personal diatribes against tradition have given way to a celebration of art which survives the test of time. With so many differences from the first four books, Paterson Five was considered by some as a separate book closely related to Williams' other late poems and by others as a coda with a substantial refocusing of earlier motifs. Even today, there is no critical agreement concerning Book Five.

If Paterson is viewed as a comedy with serious intent, however, Book Five becomes the triumphant episode written when Williams had good reason to believe his lifework might well place him among the pantheon of immortal poets. It becomes the satisfactory conclusion to the satiric poem Williams had originally projected, his own death defying leap into the stream of language which had destroyed Pound
and Cummings. In the fifth book, Williams successfully unifies the comic and serious aspects of his long poem because he is able to see his quest for a redeeming language completed. The book summarizes, illustrates and evaluates his poetics. It leaps from the local history of Paterson the city to the world history of Paterson the man, the artist among artists, the discoverer among discoverers. Book Five completes the story of a poet who has spent his life in quest of a poetic legacy for the next generation: a way to measure the living American language and a stance toward the modern American scene.

In Book Five, Williams jokingly suggests his own immortality by way of his long poem Paterson. When he died in 1963, such immortality seemed likely but by no means guaranteed. Now, nearly two decades after his death, Williams ranks as a major American writer whose reputation grows annually. New and closer looks at his monumental poetic collage are in order. When Paterson is read as an autobiographical allegory and a demonstration of Williams' poetics, Williams and his contemporary modern poets live again.
CHAPTER VIII


Williams, Intro. to The Dog and the Fever, p. 8.

Williams, Intro. to The Dog and the Fever. Pages 5-14 are devoted to a brief biography and series of comments about Quevedo; pages 14-39 present Williams' reminiscence of his mother during the years they worked together on the translation.

Williams, Selected Letters, pp. 312-313.

Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Oct. 1, 1954. Williams wrote, "As far as the continuation of Paterson is concerned, Paterson V, it got sidetracked. It turned into something else." Yale manuscripts for Book Five include some of the material which remained in Book Five with early drafts of "Asphodel." These drafts also include a passage which depicted Paterson as a modern Gulliver, "a giant surrounded by pygmies," rather than the "King-self" he would later become.

William Carlos Williams, I Wanted to Write a Poem, p. 34.

Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Sept. 23, 1958.


Williams, Selected Letters, to Louis Martz, pp. 298-300; Sister Bernetta Quinn, pp. 308-310 and 336-337; and Ralph Nash, pp. 323-324.

Williams, Selected Letters, p. 324.
Yale manuscript: Book Five Notes and Rough Drafts.

—she was half a man
Sappho was half a man anyhow — and she could WRITE — her tail in her mouth
deny it who may: the virgin turned whore: an identity


Williams, I Wanted to Write a Poem, p. 39.


Wallace Stevens' death in 1955 produced a proliferation of essays and books regarding his life and work. Williams reviewed Opus Posthumous (Yale manuscript), a collection of previously unpublished writing by Stevens edited by Samuel French Morse and published in 1957. Williams would surely have been conscious of Stevens' emphasis on the imagination and his celebrated "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" during the period he worked to complete Paterson Five.


Interview, "William Carlos Williams," Paris Review, 8 (Summer-Fall 1964), p. 127. When the interviewer noticed how the opening line of Book Five "makes an image on the page," Williams replied, "Yes, I was imitating the flight of the bird."

Weaver, p. 217, identifies the scholar as Arnold Post, Emeritus Professor of Greek at Haverford College, PA.

See Chapter VIII, Note #11.

Williams, Selected Letters, p. 324.
22. Letter from Williams to Laughlin, Mar. 2, 1958. Williams told Laughlin to delete the letter because Pound would rather it not be used. He continued, "I only included it for purely literary reasons, to relieve monotony—it would have been misinterpreted anyhow." The letter was later restored, probably after Pound was released from St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Apr. 1958.


24. Yale manuscript: "E. E. Cummings: Paintings and Poems."

25. Yale manuscript: Book Five: Notes and Early Drafts.


29. Yale manuscript: Book Five.

30. Yale manuscript: Book Five. In one draft, a man named William befriends the pregnant woman. In his Autobiography, p. 4, and pp. 167–168, Williams speculates about the William Godwin who befriended and then evicted his grandmother. Historically, the famous Godwin whom Williams wondered about could not have been the one his grandmother knew, since he died in 1836 and Williams' grandmother died in 1920 at age 83.


35. Williams, Interviews with William Carlos Williams, p. 60.

37 Poe, III.
38 Poe, II, 239.
39 Williams, Interviews with William Carlos Williams, p. 33.
40 Williams, Interviews with William Carlos Williams, p. 68.
41 Williams, Selected Letters, p. 235.
42 Williams, Interviews with William Carlos Williams, p. 40.
CONCLUSION

Paterson does not lend itself readily to any single critical approach. Though it was written in the heyday of New Criticism, close analysis of the text alone raises more questions than it answers, for there is no readily apparent pattern to Williams' collage. Unlike either The Cantos by Pound or major poems by Eliot, Paterson has not been examined closely for literary allusions and associations, probably in part because Williams' antiacademic stance suggests such an approach would be fruitless. Furthermore, critics were aware even before the final installment that the poem contained fragments of prose taken from letters, history books and other documents not composed by Williams. A line-by-line analysis of such material seems superfluous, and even when differences from original sources are noted, texts of prose fragments are too varied to readily suggest any consistent logic for their placement. Thus, a new critical approach alone doesn't reveal enough about Paterson.

Other approaches are equally unrewarding. Approaches stressing archetypes, symbols and myth appear to be useful for the first two books but fall apart for Books Three through Five. Paterson simply is not tied to ancient or modern mythology either by allusions or literary style. Similarly, any genre-related approach is doomed to failure.
Paterson has as many picaresque characteristics as epic qualities and can be called by neither name. Despite several interrelated themes, Paterson contains neither sustained narration nor any superstructure derived from an earlier classic. The collage technique which Williams used to combine his collection of prose and poetry, commentary and criticism, spoofs and satire complicates and frustrates most critical procedures.

Williams, himself, described his poem as beginning with "particulars" and "rolling up the sum, by defective means—" The "defective means" and Williams' own insistence on a unity of purpose in Paterson from the early forties through to the end of his life suggest the importance of examining in minute detail the various particulars which make up the poem. Frequently these particulars require illumination from sources outside the poem, from unpublished manuscripts and other works by Williams and his contemporaries. Thus, Paterson must be read not only with a new critical attention to the text itself but also with close attention to literature which preceded and surrounded the poem. The results of these illuminations and comparisons indicate that Paterson must also be examined in the light of Williams' own intentions, intentions which were influenced by the critical reception of individual books of Paterson, by Williams' actual position in the literary world, and by his anxiety about that position.
It is not reasonable, however, to write of literary anxiety and the interrelatedness of various literary works today without also considering Harold Bloom's major study, *The Anxiety of Influence*. According to Bloom, poets since the time of Milton have suffered from an anxiety of influence, a need to adopt literary fathers, then sever the parental connections. Fear of duplicating work of the very poets they revere has led new strong poets to misread the poems of their precursors. Hounded by suspicion that nothing new has been left for them to accomplish, strong poets write antithetical poems as corrections of, refutations of and answers to poems written by preceding strong poets. Particularly in the twentieth century, this adaptation of and rejection of models has often led to a strong poet developing a given aspect of his precursor's work to the point where the precursor's poem seems to sound like an echo of his follower's work. Thus, literary critics must look at more than any individual poem. They must look at the poem of a precursor and the poems of later disciples in order to properly place and judge any modern literary work. They must realize that a poet's anxiety can lead him to misread the poem of his precursor in order to establish his own literary identity.

There is no doubt that Williams suffered from anxiety while writing *Paterson*. In the early forties, when his long poem began to assume a coherence in his own mind, Williams was undoubtedly anxious about his position in the
literary world. But his anxiety was prompted by more than the usual twentieth-century self-consciousness. Williams truly believed that his lifework had been subverted by Eliot, that his dream of an indigenous American language had been relegated to the literary sidelines by both Eliot and Pound, but particularly by Eliot. He also knew he had not yet found the language he was seeking; he knew only where it could not be found. When he wrote a long poem detailing the story of his "search for a redeeming language," Williams was not thinking of redemption for himself alone but for future American poets as well. He included hidden portraits of those poets who had produced his own anxiety not simply because their poems were so well written that they left nothing for him but because he had a valid, indeed valuable, offering for modern poetry which had gone unrecognized. Thus, Williams suffered from more than an anxiety of influence. He also suffered from the belief that he was moving toward the poetic discovery of a way to measure the American idiom, but that those who could have helped him discover such measurement had simultaneously shirked their duty and belittled his search. Williams suffered both an anxiety of influence and an agony of repression.

*Paterson* may well be the most spectacular demonstration of antithetical poetry in the twentieth century, but there are pitfalls in approaching the poem solely from this point of view. Though Williams cites numerous precursors
such as Chaucer, Whitman and Poe, his long poem is not an
answer to these literary forebears. Rather, it is a satire
on, laugh at, answer to, judgment of and dialogue with his
own contemporaries, particularly Pound, Cummings, Eliot and
Crane. If Williams misread their poems, he also read care-
fully the major explicators of their poems and included in
Paterson his derision of the new critics. Finally, in the
very process of competing with the work of Eliot, Pound and
Crane, Williams began producing a poem judged to be equal
to those he struggled with. Paterson became a process poem
which reflected changing currents in the literary tide.
Though Paterson may have begun as antithetical poetry, it
concluded as tongue-in-cheek self-evaluation.

In early 1944, Williams considered Paterson the "de-
basing, the keg cracking assault upon the cults and the
kind of thought that destroyed Pound and made what it has
made of Eliot," an attack on tradition, religious symbolism
and politically-oriented economics. By 1946, however, when
he had concluded Book One, he used a quotation associated
with direct satiric attack on other poets as his "final
footnote to the entire poem." By the conclusion of Book
Four, four years later, Williams had become a judge of
poetic schools and could didactically condemn Eliot, Crane,
Tate and Tolson even as he exonorated Pound for the very
failings he had earlier condemned. Seven years later,
looking back on his entire poem, Williams could call the
work a "fiction" and could humorously portray himself as a
satyr-like discoverer-savior of modern American literature. He could also demonstrate and celebrate his own original contribution to the world of poetry, "the variable foot."

Application of Bloom's criteria for evaluation would be like placing a grid over a moving, flowing body of water. The currents in Williams' poem not only shifted while the poem was being written but will appear to shift again as new readers find even more of the hidden satire and as new poets see their own rhythmic roots in Williams' variable foot. Only future generations will be able to assess Paterson and place it in its proper perspective to world literature. Only future critics will know whether Paterson is indeed the major work of a poet as strong as Chaucer, a poet who has permanently affected America's stance toward poetry. Already, American writers have declared their independence from the British language and are incorporating Williams' perspectives toward local material as a vital approach to their immediate areas. Already, writers are adapting to their own voices his combination of vivid imagery and direct statement arranged in lines to achieve the fullest emotional impact. Although "the relative foot" has not become an accepted measuring term for American poetry in the way iambic pentameter became a standard after the age of Chaucer, Williams maintained that poets were intuitively using "the variable foot" even before he named it. Perhaps part of the reason "the variable foot" has not become a standard form of
measurement is that it has been too narrowly associated with Williams' triadic line. Although the triadic line first enabled Williams to clarify his procedure for counting strong stresses and for measuring space within the line, he evidently believed he was using "the variable foot" in all his later poems, including those which were not set up in three-step lines. A better understanding of Williams' prosody may well establish him as a forerunner to current practices in prosody.

The foregoing study of Paterson reveals both the unity of purpose and the continually expanding design of the poem as it grew beyond Williams' early intentions and became an ongoing commentary on the modern literary scene. Another study should be made of discrete lyrical passages from both Paterson and other poems by Williams which illustrate Williams' movement toward and accomplishment with "the variable foot." Still another study should be made of Williams' imagery as it relates to the imagery used by other modern writers. Critics looking closely at poems by MacLeish, Sandburg, Auden, and perhaps other moderns, might also profitably look at Paterson, for it appears likely that Williams briefly answered, parodied or satirized a number of minor poems as well as the major ones covered in this study. And Paterson should certainly be read in the future both for its originality in breaking with an entire set of literary traditions and for its position among other poems which have broken a prevailing mode to set new major
trends. All such studies will be greatly assisted by close examination of Paul Mariani's recent biography of Williams, a monumental study of the poet's personality and a reminder that Williams the man cannot be separated from Williams the writer.

The final verdict on *Paterson* is not yet in. At this point in literary history, it is important to recognize the unity in *Paterson* when it is read as a comedy and the originality in *Paterson* when it is read as a statement of, demonstration of, and evaluation of Williams' poetics. The unicorn of Book Five may yet prove to be immortal. Paterson, both man and city, may escape death by being embodied in a poem that remains larger than any single critical approach or evaluation.
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