Chapter V

"The surface / glistens, only the surface": Paterson Book III

The Writer and the Reader Weaving out Reality 'within the act of perception':

Section 1

A quotation from Santayana (The Last Puritan) precedes section 1 echoing the contents of what is to follow. The focus in this section is on the city as the locus of life, the city as a 'second body for the human mind.' Beneath the teeming contours of the city, the flux of life surfaces and breaks up consolidating time in the prism of the present, past and future. No wonder the city becomes the favourite subject of many a contemporary writer. Mutlu Konuk Blazing aptly describes the city as a living organism that "stands forth as the present reality of its past and upholds the idea of time as a creative force as opposed to the concept of time as destruction."¹

The opening part appears to establish a dialectic, joining the reader and the poet as one and at the same time separate. The tone of the lyric speaker invites the reader in:

I love the locust tree
the sweet white locust.

The lines that follow involves the reader through a question;

How much?
How much?
How much does it cost
to love the locust tree
The search for beauty is something that the reader can involve in, along with the poet. It is the very process of *Paterson*, an endeavour not confined to any kind of closure. Turning away from the suffocating summer streets, from the sweltering alienated city life, a refuge is sought in the rarefied world of books. “A cool of books / will some times lead the mind to libraries / of a hot afternoon (*P118*).” The experience of anticipation is shared jointly by the writer and reader:

[. . . . . ] we think we hear a wind,

actual

to lead the mind away. (118)

The deliberate distancing after the period after ‘actual’ is the space that the reader gets to engage with a reality that is elusive, hallucinatory yet much hoped for. The stanzaic divisions are cut across by the line ‘to lead the mind away’ thrice. The effect is an accentuation of the zest of the search. Very soon the tone changes to accommodate a different perspective. A self-conscious distancing of the observer and the observed dominates when the narrative tone foregrounds the third person ‘he.’

Summer, it is summer

— and still the roar in his mind is unabated. (119)

This is the roar of the Passaic Falls, the reverberations of the flux of life. By presenting the imaginative vision in forms common to the reader’s experience, rather than in forms restricted to the subjective experience of the poet, Williams is doing what he described in *Imagination* (107). “The attempt is made to separate things of the imagination from
life, and obviously, by using forms common to experience so as not to frighten the onlooker away, but to invite him." It is analogous to confronting the phenomenal world directly, without being encumbered by the overt mediation of the lyric speaker. As in The Transparent Lyric enunciated by David Walker, the reader can experience the work from inside and outside at once.²

The poetic tone grows incantatory when the search for the beautiful thing is like a magic ritual of destruction for creation.

Blow! so be it. bring down! consume
and submerge! so be it. cyclone, fire
and flood. So be it, Hell, New Jersey, it said
on the letter. [..........................] (120)

The library newspaper files embody details of mundane facts of life like the Paterson cricket club, a woman lobbyist, sensational atrocities like a child going home burned in a field, or the drowned, and frozen girl and boy clasped in each other's arms. Library, reading engenders only this effect: "The mind / reels back amazed from reading / so be it /" The world of books open up historical, social and economic vistas. There is the reference to the destruction of Lambert's Castle, the anti-union man who spent a real fortune on his dwelling (P 121). Catholina Lambert was a successful immigrant from England, whose "castle" a prominent Paterson landmark, was razed to the ground. George Zabriski describes it in "The Geography of 'Paterson':

Lambert's fortune was destroyed by his anti union attitude, which in the end made his mill holdings valueless. After his death the Castle and the Mountain became county property. At one time, the Castle served as an
orphan asylum; later, the county started to raze the entire structure, but stopped after a wing had been torn down. At present the Castle is the headquarters of the Passaic County Park Commission and the Passaic County Historical Society.  

Williams refers to this in the reminiscent tone of a man, "Rose and I did not know each other when we both went to the Paterson strike around the first world war..." (112)

Sankey Benjamin interprets this section as a reminder of "the violence latent in modern industrial society." Like the atrocious demolition of the Buddhist statues and monuments that has shocked our contemporary world, the tendency to destroy what it does not know how to value, is latent in the mass. The building is "incomprehensible; of no USE!" (121) Hence they plan its destruction.

The movement is paradigmatic of the transparent lyric. The lines gain a kind of energy and emphasis by playing off the narrative tone against the subjectivity that inheres in the search for the beautiful thing. The poetic vision of the coalescing of the world and the word comes out as a beacon of hope in the search:

The province of the poem is the world
When the sun rises, it rises in the poem
and when it sets darkness comes
and the poem is dark

Here also, the distanced period at the end is the space offered for the word to absorb the world.

The effort to seek solace in the library turns futile as "the library is desolation, it has a smell of its own / of stagnation and death." The beautiful thing turns elusive.
And as his mind fades, joining others, he
seeks to bring it back – but it
eludes him, flutters again and flies off and
again away. (124)
The focus shifts in different directions with the prose narration of the savage rituals of
Indians (the wounded man dancing to death) or the ‘the brave’ ordered to be mutilated.
In between the prose narrations there peeps in a voice, asking Doctor Williams:

I got

a woman outside I want to marry, will
you give me a blood test ? (126)
The adventures of Tommy Walker who cooked omelet in the middle of his tight-rope
walking between the Morris mountains is treated in elaborate detail. The canvas of
Paterson can accommodate every thing. Out of this juxtaposed facet planes, a beauty
is sought. An intimate relationship between a man and woman is a hunt for beauty and
purity. The man urges her ‘to take off her clothes’ to purify herself. The urge to cleanse
one to purity is strong as the tone varies in mood.

Take off your clothes,

( I said )

haunted, the quietness of your face

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)

[.................................]

(Then, my anger rising) TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES! I didn't ask you
To take off your skin. I said your clothes, your clothes. [. . .]

[.................................]

... let me look at you. (I said, weeping) (128-29)

The parenthetical expressions present the varying levels of the agony of poetic creation, a purifying process of extracting 'the radiant gist' out of the 'pitchblende.' The dialectical tension swinging between marriage and death, union and separation is felt here:

For what is there but love, that stares death
In the eye, love, begetting marriage -- (130)

The search for language can redeem one from death, and the skeins of thought mooted earlier (the province of the poem is the world) are taken up again to weave out greater dimensions:

"sing me a song to make life tolerable, a song
of a man and woman: the riddle of a man
and a woman.

What language could allay our thirsts,

What winds lift us, what floods bear us

past defeats
but song but deathless song?

Voices, multiple, diffident voices of disapproval, urge the poet to give up the attempt.

"Give it up. Quit it. Stop writing." Evidently, the impossibility of the task is strong in the poet's mind. William knows very well that the broken, abrasive contours of contemporary life cannot be confined to the serene tone, graceful continuity and monumental beauty of a long poem—the epic. For a time, it appears tempting to succumb to the passivity, to the cold embrace of death, death the mighty leveler.

Death lies in wait

a kindly brother—

full of missing words,

the words that never get said—

a kindly brother to the poor.

Yet the search has to go on; the section ends with the image of a cotton spinner (the poet or the reader) looking down, searching, seeking.

[......] the mind elsewhere

looking down

Seeking.

The cotton spinner and the poet alike weave out reality within the act of perception. The varied strands of life with all their disjunct surface constitute their fabric. In Williams the very syntax keeps pace with this erratic way of perception. Thomas Clark in his article "Moving Images" in *New Statesman* explains the process:

Williams' work is distinguished by his ability to write from within the act of perception, making his poem a mark of complex interaction between the
manifested field and the mind's gesture to apprehend it. [. . .] the syntax of his poetry like that of speech is paratactic or sequential, he employs conjunctions or dashes to mark the consecutive nature of occurrence, while eschewing the casual, or logical connections we customarily use to establish a cumulative knowledge of situation. Williams' typical syntax reproduces in some degree, the living procedure of perception, a linear, disjunctive groping movement [. . .] the order of words have the gestural order of utterance, the poet's sign of undivided being and his actual presence in the world.5

Now it is up to the reader to weave out the fabric using his powers of perception.


Book III Section 2

This part, by taking the Paterson fire of 1902 as its central incident, treats fire as at once the agony of creativity as well as the principle of destruction. "To write is a fire and it is the fire that burned the works of Sapho" (P137-38). The 'vulgarity of the beauty,' the teeming layers of the contingent, defy any artistic ordering. The fire image reflects the stress and agony of the poet's psyche (conscious and unconscious) in the process of creation. The predicament is given ample expression in the beginning itself:

The writing is nothing, the being
in a position to write (that's
where they get you) is nine tenths
of the difficulty: (137)
The poetic travail to reach that state of creativity is the vista that opens up in the ensuing section.

The physical devastation caused by the fire is portrayed in the prose analogue; but, the total burning experience of the mind torn between experience and expression and the yearning for something new to come out, work as an under current in the powerful prose narration of the ritualistic Indian ceremonies of fire. The problem projected is the dialectic of the subject-object:

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. (140)

The poet is fully aware of the fact that “there are fires that / smoulder / smoulder a life
time, and never burst / into a flame.” (142)

Just as the Indians related themselves to their locale, the poet also has to attempt to relate himself. The incident from Dutch Colonial history, touches on the destruction of the related culture of this country. The native Indians who made money out of ‘sea shells, bird feathers and beaver skins were close to nature. The Dutch soldiers unjustly accuse them, torture and kill them. This is the encroachment of the new world on the old, which is ruthless in its measures of oppression. One brave Indian, cruelly wounded asked permission to dance “kinte kaye” - but he received “so many wounds that he dropped down dead”(138). The narration proceeds through a kind of associationalism and the fume and incense now merges into the real Paterson fire that devoured the city.
Thus on three dimensions the fire works: the fire of the Paterson's mind that feeds on
the library, the actual fire of Paterson and the ritualistic fire.

The verse gets the fire of an incantation. The pauses and stops, end stopped
lines and monosyllabic stops give it that force. The repetitive intones, "so be it" echo a
prophetic Biblić chant of an omniscient force mastering the situation. It also indicates
the givenness of the situation; one has to accept what life offers:

Papers

(Consumed) scattered to the winds. Black

The ink burned white, metal white. So be it.

Come overall beauty. Come soon. So be it.

A dust between the fingers. So be it.

Come tatterdemalion futility. Win through.

So be it. So be it. (142)

The image of the bottle 'mauled in the fire' that outlasts the fire in a new form is
significant. As Roger Simon puts it in "The Bottle in the Fire: Resistance as Creation in
William Carlos Williams," the bottle represents, "a fusion of the hand of the artist and
the substances which had resisted him. The attack and the resistance to attack have
become a means of creation." The notion of 'the beautiful thing' is built up through a
mixing up of no-sequiturs, contradictions, and mixed metaphors through run-on lines. It
is a 'defiance of authority' (144), 'vulgarity of beauty'(145), 'language'(146), 'the dream of
dead men'(148), 'the flame's lover'(148), and of course 'the feminine principle' that
Williams loved in women.
Paterson’s encounter with a black woman is another insight into exploring the ‘vulgarity of beauty’. She is the, 

Beautiful thing, your

vulgarity of beauty surpasses all their

perfections. (145)

Paterson encounters her below the ground, in a basement, “by the laundry tubs”:

By the wall on your damp bed, your long

body stretched out negligently on the dirty sheet (151)

This dark woman is the ‘Persephone gone to hell’ – regal in silent indifference, in dignified acceptance of her violation. Paterson is ‘shaken’ by this beauty, the beauty of the acceptance of even the unbearable. As Audrey. T. Rogers puts in his study of Virgin and Whore: The Image of Women in the Poetry of William Carlos Williams:

There is little doubt that Williams not only loved women but saw in them both a challenge and a fulfillment. In his poetry he sought to identify with the same life surge he felt women epitomized, what he termed “the female principle.” In his conviction that the supposed polar entities of male and female “give birth to a world of becoming,” he found continuity, rebirth, and cyclical patterns of seasons in nature and in man. In his earliest poetry and prose, William’s women were enriched by his awareness of Demeter/Persephone. He was haunted by the myth of Persephone in Hell.
The expression ‘beautiful thing’ first appeared at the end of Columbus chapter “The discovery of the Indies” in *The American Grain* (1925). In the new land of discovery, Columbus contemplates, “during that time I walked among the trees which was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.” Hence the beautiful thing was there for the simple viewing in the beginning of American experience. The beautiful thing appears in numerous incarnations in *Paterson*, but perhaps receives her apotheosis in Book V in the fused version of the virgin and whore based on a single identification of sexuality, evocative of fundamentally identical sexual energy.

The devastated library (silent) is set over against the vitality of the living person, “the beautiful thing.” The narration at times discards the first person tone “I” to absorb an impersonated tone, “Poet / Are you there?” (145) The very act of the search for beauty is considered as an act of fictionality. The tone resounds like ‘an inverted bell.’ An odd contrast is brought out through a variation in theme, a prose analogue depicting faulty language and its misuse. It is a half literate letter from a Negro girl. The section ends on a note on the struggle for articulation; the beauty encountered and experienced is beyond expression:

BRIGHTen

the cor

ner

where you are!

— a flame,

black plush, a dark flame

(154)
Here the asymmetric typography with irregular indentation and spacing even at the cost of cutting a word, has the special effect of highlighting 'brighten,' a process which can take place even in the ordinary, halty, paced, inexpressible 'corners' of everyday experience. Beauty a dark flame smouldering in the invisible contours of life has the potential to glow and brighten the world around.

As Sankey Benjamin puts it, “the ”Beautiful thing” is the beauty latent in the world of the present, and therefore the poet's proper “beloved” subject matter; she is also the poem itself, or that which lives in the poem: an irreducible presence—Paterson is the story of Williams' infatuation with it and the process of his encapsulation within its trammels. Beauty the binary opposite of the ugly stands for the puzzling enigma of the present that puts Williams at great hazards of choice and selection until he reaches an elevated plane beyond pluralism.

The Surrealistic Streak: the Struggle ‘to begin to begin’: The Paterson Pallimtext.

Book III Section 3

In Book III, the strategy of presentation is more or less in the Dadaist, Surrealist mode. Their concept of synthesis through negation, and creation through destruction works as the under current here also. They addressed the fragmented reality on these lines and formed an aesthetic that was an ironic mimicry of chaos, the ‘decomposed,’ and ‘irrational.' The Dadaist collage anti-aesthetic, its calculatedly irrational use of Cubist fragmentation for the purpose of parody and satire appealed to Williams. In his introductory essay for his first issue of Contact, Williams praised Dada's methods and called Dada's art one of "decomposition" rather than composition. "This America," he said scornfully, "is a bastard country where decomposition is the prevalent spectacle."
To criticize it, Williams would adopt Dada’s ironic mimicry of chaos and write poems that were as ‘decomposed’ and irrational as their subjects.

Williams was drawn to Surrealism because it combined “in practice the representational value of the image (imagism) and the symbolic value of the image (symbolism) in a sort of dialectical play of values.” The parent of Surrealism is Dada. It was a movement initiated by Tristan Tzara in 1916, named with a random picked up word, and dedicated to the destruction of all standards of morals and taste. In this school of abuse, many future Surrealists learnt contempt for art and society, while longing for new values and new art which they sought in Marxism and automatic writing. Marx, Freud and Hegel moulded Surrealist theory. From Freud came the exploration of the subliminal mind: from Hegel the concept of synthesis by negation, creation through destruction: from Marx a rationale for the hatred of contemporary values and a political programme of action.

The growth of the movement falls into three periods. The years 1920-24 are marked as the aesthetic side by the development of techniques for exploiting the unconscious, and on the political level by the search for a new programme. During the five years ending in 1930, the surrealists became officially identified with The Communist International, while producing literature in accord with theories of pure automatism. Paul Marianne refers to the agonies Williams had to undergo on suspected charges of leftist leanings (A New World Naked 610 - 23). But in deciding the value of Surrealism to himself, Williams turned not to political or aesthetic politics but focused on his immediate reality, the world of objects that exists in a fluid intimacy. As Mike Weaver puts it, Paterson is “an extended trope in which the elements conscious and
unconscious, representational and symbolic, collide and recoil continuously, compounded neither into a fixed level of awareness nor into a single mode of expression" (The American Background 144).

In section 3, the theme of creation through destruction is developed side by side with two or other themes that appear thoroughly incongruous or paradoxical. The first part is a surrealist verse passage with images like 'boney fish bearing lights /stalk the eye,' evoking the presence of the contemporary world. There is the eerie description of the killing of a 'spectral cat,' the death of Pogatticut a man of gigantic stature, Grand Sachem of Delware Indians, the sacrificial death of a dog, a flower shop advertisement of funeral designs, and a letter from Pound followed by a drilling record quoted from Nelson's History of Paterson. This together with the random repetition of the same theme (the search for beauty, language) in varied forms of prose and poetry, create a grotesque, ironic effect that derides the decadent European culture. It is difficult to make out in this part of Paterson III, whether it is the deliberate act of the poet, or the upsurge of the world of reality inundating the canvas of Paterson. The reader's predicament is similar to that referred to earlier (140):

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.

Michael Davidson in "Palimtexts: Postmodern Poetry and the Material Text", explains what he characterizes in postmodern writing as 'palimtext':

I would like to retain post – structuralism's emphasis on writing as a trace,
an inscribing and re-inscribing that, for lack of a better term, I have called a “palimpsest.” By this word I mean to emphasise the intertextual – and inter-discursive-quality of postmodern writing as well as its materiality. The palimpsest is neither a genre nor an object, but a writing in process that may make use of any number of textual resources. As its name implies the palimpsests retains vestiges of prior writings out of which it emerges or more accurately, it is the still-visible record of its responses to those earlier writings.12

Davidson writes that as the curator of the Archive for New Poetry, he had a unique chance to view George Oppen’s “palimpsestic” manuscripts. A page containing a verse from the early 1960’s would be followed by a page with scribbles from his last days. Prose and poetry were interspersed with grocery lists, phone numbers, quotations from philosophers, observations on films, tables of contents from books. “Each manuscript page was like a collection as a whole: a marvelously scribbled, jumbled and chaotic written field” (Palimpsests 85).

Such emphasis on the process rather than the product of writing dissolves boundaries between literature as artifact and literature as daily record. This part of Paterson is also palimpsestic. The materialization of writing makes the page a ‘field.’ Contemporary writers make use of this strategy to match the topography of their experience of temporality. Davidson quotes from Bernadette Mayer’s “Midwinter Day,” to show how it is animated by the urgency of staying within certain imposed temporal boundaries (Palimpsests 91):

Today I am the present writer
At the present time the snow has come
At this moment we won't starve
At once the ferries terrify us and
We knead red and green peppers with
Our contrasting hands

At a time

Very close to the present I want to get
A tight pair of pants and dance
With you with things as they are (16-17)

This trend has led to the treatment of the physical medium as the subject as well as the means of production, as in Charles Olson's oralist poetics where he emphasizes the typewriter as the score for the voice and the physical page as a map or graph.

The natural disasters that ravaged Paterson city early in the twentieth century, (fire, flood, and typhoon) are thematically fused into the interior design woven round the poetic search for a redeeming language. The flood that follows the fire is like the flood of explication, emendation and commentary which follows original invention. Drowning even the harmless dogs, it is also the drowning flood of Noah, of the Homeric 'wine dark sea', 'wine of death'(158). The flood is heavy and oppressive, sullying clear waters, burying all in a 'muddy flux'. Peter Schmidt in his "The Aggregate is Untamed': Williams's Dadaist Poetry," traces the influence of Dada's disgust with reason, social mores, and history in the middle phase of Williams' poetic career, from "March"(1916) to the first four books of Paterson (1946-51). He finds metaphors of violent destruction like a flood in Paterson, Book III.2: a car wreck, as in "Romance Moderne" and "To Elsie"; a
dangerous underground journey, as in “Sub Terra,” Kora in Hell, or Paterson Book III, 3; a firestorm as in the poem dated “10/21” from The Descent of Winter or in Paterson Book III, 2; and an apocalypse like that in the opening pages of Spring and All.

The chaos of contemporaneity is overwhelming, inundating like the flood. One has to take life as it offers itself; hence the repetitive intone of passive acceptance, “so be it, so be it.” The plight is vividly described:

[...]

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 words break loose or – sadly hold, unshaken. Unshaken! They gather up on the bridge and look down, unshaken.

So be it! So be it! So be it! (156)

The hotch-potch medley of life is made available to the reader. Flood courses through Paterson city, books, ‘the rachitic brain’ of the poet and the reader. The image of “A dog head dropped back, under water legs sticking up” sums up its impact. The theme of flood inundating the library, the animate and inanimate habitation of Paterson fill up the helpless, stagnant and suffocative atmosphere of this section. The ‘fossil’ like traditions and institutions presented by the library is a stasis. It is a dangerous place and the urge to get out of it is there in the rhetoric of a real shout, “Let me out.” Though the question is raised, “Why do I bother with this rubbish?” (134), the decision is already
taken: “Write carelessly so that nothing that is not green will survive” (155). The flood that carries away the corpse of Henry’s dog can stand for much abhorred traditions or contemporary decadence and depravity. Prose narrations of superstitious practices, and witchcraft cut across in the story of Van Giesen and his wife haunted by the visitations of the supernatural. The Protestantism of Dutch settlers practicing witchcraft and real estate is presented in half comical air.

We get a graphic portrayal of the total immersion in the flood, the overwhelming reality that places man in a kind of moral miasma:

---to the teeth, to the very eyes

uh

uh,

FULL STOP

--and leave the world

to darkness

and to

me (167)

Here on the page is the visual image of getting drowned, submerging slowly, slowly in to the depths until vision darkens into nothingness. The scattered words cut diagonally across the page to create this special defect.

But the poet is not ready to succumb to the ennui caused by it. He has to keep his balance and as a self reminder it comes:

But somehow a man must lift himself

again –
again is the magic word

turning the in out ::

Speed against the inundation. (162)

In the ensuing part, the scattered thoughts lie scattered in lines slanting up and shooting down. The flood has a cataclysmic force and rocks are jarred loose and driven by. Under its powerful force even words and phrases lie scattered. The slanting words on the page become free floating entities that lack a clear, observable grammar to fix their meaning. As the flood of words inundate and scatter, a postmodern schizophrenic condition prevails at the psychic and linguistic level with total disentanglement from the past, present and future. The very form and epistemological structure of the poem is thrown to winds. In fact what we find here is a surrealistic influx wherein the conscious and unconscious, representational and symbolic, collide and recoil defying any single fixed mode of expression and awareness (see P 164, 165).

The shift in theme and idea and variations in style create a grotesque effect. There is a letter from Pound followed by a Drilling Record quoted from Nelson's History of Paterson. Only through imaginative exercise the reader can work out a relation between these incongruities; the second can be taken as an answer to Pound who advises reading (drilling into the past) as something that marks the end of drilling.

The first stated theme of the search for language is dropped for sometime only to recur unexpectedly and with grotesque or ironic effect in incongruous contexts. There is the reference to the farmer who broke his wife's cancerous jaw because she was too weak, too sick to work in the field for him (168). Yet he composed a song to her to entertain her in her reading! The whole scheme of movement – both in shifting rhythms
of language and in violent juxtaposition of themes, views, persons, events both past and present – effectively capture the random sequence which impinges on the consciousness.

That Williams was conscious of the 'influx of the irrational' comes out clearly in his letter to Sister Bemetta on August 23, 1951 (SL 309):

[... one fault in modern compositions [...] is that the irrational has no place. Yet in life (you show it by your tolerance of things which you feel no loss at not understanding), there is much that men exclude because they do not understand. The truly great heart includes what it does not at once grasp, just as the great artist includes things which go beyond him. [...] The irrational enters the poem in those letters, included in the text, which do not seem to refer to anything in the 'story' yet do belong somehow to the poem – how, it is not easy to say.

Dating from the days of Aristotle, there has been a tradition of treating fiction not only separate from, but also superior to history, a mode of writing which can only narrate the contingent and particular. The truth that is dispersed in the immediate is explored and juxtaposed against the historical. As Linda Hutcheon puts it in "Fiction, History, Historiographic Metafiction," "It is part of the post modernist stand to confront the paradoxes of fictive versus historical representation, the particular versus the general, the present versus the past. And its confrontation is itself contradictory, for it refuses to recuperate or dissolve either side of the dichotomy, yet it is willing to exploit both." Williams’ art also juxtaposes the present against he past only to highlight how the
present in itself contains the best of past and future. Sheer nostalgic clinging to the past is not his line. A sarcastic note is pointed at Eliot, the exponent of the past:

Who is it spoke of April? Some insane engineer. There is no recurrence.

The past is dead. [. . .] (169)

The vituperation goes against those who ‘want to rescue a framework of laws, a skeleton of practices, a calcined reticulum of the past.’ His strategy is to focus on the random, ‘write carelessly, so that nothing that is not green will survive’:

Let the words
fall any way at all — that they may
hit love aslant. (169)

It turns out as if the whole book of Paterson is worked out on this device. Things fall at random into the tip of the pen, the contingent and aleatory dominate, thus nullifying any set goals or agenda. The very act of ordering becomes a subversion of ordering. There is agony involved in it, because what the flood has precipitated is a cloggy mind, a pustular scum. The predicament is pathetic:

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. (167)
The ‘roar of the present’ necessitates a speech ‘consonant with the day’. The choice is between ‘comb,’ and ‘succumb.’ The task of ridding language of its knots, to make the word incarnate in meaning is a formidable task, yet he has to do it:

The past above, the future below
And the present pouring down: the roar
The roar of the present, a speech —
is of necessity, my sole concern.
[..............................]
[..............................] I cannot stay here
to spend my life looking into the past:
the future is no answer. I must
find my meaning and lay it, white,
beside the sliding water: myself —
comb out the language — or succumb

—whatever the complexion. Let
me out! (Well, go!) this rhetoric
is real!

(173)

The poetic urge is to get out of the trammels of the past, the stale world of books and the pustular scum precipitated by the flood of contemporaneity, that can only swallow him up into its intricate entrails. But no escape is possible. To “begin to begin again” is problematic, since it raises the question: how can a new beginning be original? Every beginning must be a repetition of the past with a difference. Such sequence of
repetitions flow through time and the decision to ‘find my meaning and lay it’ can be the one way of countering the stasis. The effort to raise this environment to expression without impairing the status of neither the subject nor the object turns out to be an unending journey of a long poem, because the freedom from the contingencies of time and space, history and culture is denied to him. Here in the section ending of Book III, language is divorced from any clear chain of signification and reduced to the materiality of the words strewn on the page.

“The sea that sucks in all the rivers”: Paterson book IV

An Experiment in Different Registers: Section 1

Michael Foucault referred to the problem of the present that arouses unresolvable epistemological issues this way: “May be the most certain of all philosophical problems is the problem of the present time, of what we are, in this very moment.” In an effort to explore that, contemporary writing indulges in various forms of spacious, self-conscious forms of experimentation, dealing with the epistemology of the surfaces rather than that of the hidden. It mixes up ontological levels by incorporating visions, dreams, hallucinations, pictorial representation, facts of life and its fragments that permeate the present space and time.

To capture this elusive reality is the central concern of Paterson that moves on with the driving desire for ‘invention,’ a gathering of meaning to the unceasing flux of life. Williams knows very well that reality is an unceasing process and all preconceived forms and all closure is unfaithful to reality. “Write carelessly”, “let the words fall anyway
at all" (P 169), is the strategy. Probably Williams conforms to the notion of conceiving
everything in a circle, the centre of which is everywhere and circumference nowhere.

Relating things on the axis of contiguity, Paterson Book IV presents a vivisection
of the economic, political and social reality with its debased moral values and absurd
relationships. There are shifts in perspectives when the text modulates itself from high
lyricism to conversational poetry and breaks up into disconnected parts of letters,
advertisements, historical records, facts of science and treatises on the socialization of
credit. This kind of use of narrative devices and the opposition of meditative and
speaking voices refute the fiction of a homogenous social and aesthetic community.
Instead of relying heavily on metaphors, Williams thus is able to portray the entropy of a
modern city in its vivid and varied contours. In I Wanted To Write A Poem (79),
Williams speaks about this:

> With the approach to the city, international character begins to enter the
innocent river and pervert it; sexual perversions, such things that
every metropolis when you get to know it houses. . . . When the river
reaches pollution which my river comes to face in Book IV, I had to
take the characters and show them graphically.

But Williams' portrayal of the city and its decadence is different from the unproductive
negativism of The Waste Land since Paterson is the harbinger of a new reality.
‘Dissonance’ leads to ‘discovery’ and ‘descent’ beckons to the ‘ascent.’

The first section introduces three characters, Dr. P, a wealthy New York lesbian
named Corydon and a young woman from the back country of New Jersey, Phyllis. Dr.
P wants to make love to Phyllis, but it is an unconsummated marriage. What does takes
place is perhaps a perverse marriage between Phyllis and Corydon which might mean the absorption of the provincial town by the modern city.

The perverse confusions that comes of a failure to untangle language and own it up echo through and through. The agony of expression is clear here:

Good bye, dear. I had a wonderful time
Wait, there is something, but I have forgotten what it was. something I wanted
to tell you. Completely gone! Completely,
Well, good bye. (183)

There is a mixture of languages. This section "The Run To The Sea" is a narrative, most of the action being in the form of a dialogue between an aging woman (Corydon) and a young nurse (Phyllis). The poetess in the 'Idyl' has her versions of reality framed by poetic visions from the past, classical and modern. She writes to Phyllis a poem in the unreal form of a pastoral and Phyllis writes to her alcoholic Father, letters in a very down to earth language. In between the conversations of Phyllis, Paterson and Corydon, as in a metafiction, a voice is heard distancing itself in space and time.

The Poet

Oh! Paterson! Oh married man!
He is the city of cheap hotels and private entrances of taxies at the door, the car standing in the rain hour after hour by the road house entrance (183)
This narrative tone creates a space for objective scrutiny. Yet this voice is resonant with the centrality of the predicament – a sense of loss, an agony of expression struggling for retrieval and rejuvenation.

There is much of conversation poetry used in this section:

Have any of these men

you speak of

---- and has he?

No.

Good.

What is good about it?

Then you are still a virgin!

What is it to you? (200)

The wealthy New York lesbian Corydon who looks forward to Europe, out of touch with local setting, takes away Phyllis (the young woman from the back country) on a trip to Anticosti. This can be the absorption of the provincial town by the modern city or the ravaging, ravishing effect of urbanization. The river gets polluted as it reaches the city and these two women stand for the stasis and stagnation of American culture. Williams portrays the mechanical loveless lovemaking by employing metaphors of sexual mutilation to highlight its meaninglessness. As Sankey Benjamin puts it:

Now, in a parody of sex, the skyscraper elevators become symbols for the act of making money: huge impersonal phalluses, “sliding” up and down in the tall building where the “money is made,” a mechanized act of generation. “Unmoved”, the people in the elevators are
paradoxically in violent motion, as the elevators move rapidly up and
down like "directed missiles."\(^{16}\)

Williams here dispenses with the conventional range of poetic voices available to the
poetry of the time and is devising specific rhetorical and psychological strategies. The
urban experience is there in full presence, through the idiomatic language, colloquial
phrasing, non-metrical rhythm, informal syntax and conversational poetry. Williams'
innovations in rhetoric are most pervasive in Book IV. Here is a rejection of 'pure
poetry' that characterized the lyric poetry of the 1980's and the first decade of twentieth
century. He extends the available modes of rhetoric and experiments in a mixture of
different registers. The poetess in the 'Idyl' has got her versions of reality framed by
poetic visions from the past, classical or modern. She resorts to an unreal form of a
pastoral with lines that are Yeatsian. Phyllis on the other hand writes to her alcoholic
father in a language that is down to earth:

Dear Pappy

How yuh doing? Are you behaving? because she wants me to
go fishing with her. For a month! What do you say? You'd like that. (192)

The conversation between Corydon and Phyllis, Phyllis and Paterson, is couched in a
rhetoric that is spaced with abrupt stops, unanswered questions and flippant answers
that reveal an erotic relationship. In between random run on lines, Williams orchestrates
his lines carefully weighing and measuring words and consonants to heighten the
musical quality of language.

A ring is round

but can not bind
though it may bound
a lover's mind. (192)

Decomposition – the Art of Particularizing the General to Explore the Universal in
the Local: Book IV Section 2

Dissonance
(if you are interested)
leads to discovery (207)

Dissonance (decomposition), is the magic word that encapsulates enormous power, the
power that might accrue from dissipation of energy. It is a kind of dancing signifier that
reaches out to the inexplicable, ephemeral and mutable reality. To a reader who is
interested in exploration, as the parenthetical phrase explains, dissonance leads to
discovery. This section of Paterson IV leads us that way.

This part is a loose montage of Madam Curie's investigations, prose materials
illustrating exploration, research, discovery, a letter, a passage clipped from a medical
journal entry recording discovery of America, and several metaphorical elaborations.
The inventive brain of Madam Curie could split up the atom to release energy from
matter; likewise a diagnosis is made for the economic evil, emphasizing ‘credit’ and its
right distribution, the energy released out of 'money.' Discovery as a cure for economic
ills, discovery as a suffering and sacrifice, discovery as a form of love and discovery as
a point of departure are the fine threads of thought that weave out the structure.

Relationships turn to paradoxical levels, when in the first part the Father takes his
son for a lecture in the Solarium to ‘discover’ his interest and later to be reminded of
his friend's advice, "The best thing a man can do for his son, when he is born, is to die." (201). The world of the young boy and that of his father are world apart. How pale and young the boy seemed among those pigs, myself among them! who surpassed him only in experience, . . .

Billy Sunday, the evangelist, who held a large revival in Paterson in 1915, following the Paterson Strike, against the 'radical union movement' is referred to sarcastically; to "break" the strike and put those S.O Bs in their places, be Geezus, by calling them to God! (203)

His efforts to split the personality on grounds of spirituality is made hollow by the empty repetition of his opening song before the sermon, "brighten the corner where you are."

Allen Ginsberg was an ardent admirer of Williams, his views and poetic style. The long letter included is Ginsberg's, and it shares the enthusiasm of Williams' exploration of the 'local' Paterson, and the search for redeeming language. It winds up, "I ran backstage to accost you, but changed my mind, after waving at you, and ran off again."

Williams' splitting of the foot has let out something 'luminous,' some kind of a discovery that has inspired his epigone.

The report of a medical diagnosis and a cranky advertisement on credit and finance fix into the space with a jarring note. The poetic harangue broods on the question whether 'the woman is the weaker vessel and whether a small Polish baby nurse, Curie could discover the radio-active force to order, perfect and control empires.
The allusive undertones move in the direction of the Greek legends Sapho, Electra and Parthenon temple. This sudden shift in tone and theme that takes one unawares is the strategy of Paterson. Sankey Benjamin observes in his introduction to his study of Paterson:

The language of Paterson can be intricate and discontinuous; it can also be very natural and clear. Generally it is clear and natural except where special exigencies of transition or metaphor tempts Williams to skip over steps in the presentation of an idea, or to move without explanation or apology to a new subject. A certain calculated obscurity is, as we have seen, part of Williams’ plan for the poem.” (20)

When mighty chunks of material from outside avalanche into the fabric of Paterson, it causes a breakup of structure, tone and theme. Instead of attributing it to a ‘calculated obscurity,’ one would prefer to see it as an inevitable fate of a text that opens out to the world. The long letter is followed by a lyrical outburst partly in triadic measure on discovery by Madam Curie:

A dissonance

in the valence of Uranium

led to the discovery

Dissonance

(if you are interested)

leads to discovery
Dissonance or decomposition separates and highlights the particular in the general. Such concentration on details leads to discovery of universal structures. Madam Curie could do that; the same challenge awaits the poet, the poem, and the reader.

Contemporary reality itself is ruled by chance, irony and unpredictability. It all depends on the way you take it, "if you are interested." Things are relative gathering meaning the way you take it. There is a distrust of logic and a spontaneous uncalculated effort to take chances without much concern about its implications. The self is caught up between mind and matter, form and actuality. The violent yoking of the totally opposite occurs:

\[
\text{MONEY} : \text{JOKE} \quad \text{(i.e., crime under the circumstances : value clipped away at accelerated pace.)}
\]

\[
\text{do you joke when a man is dying of a brain tumour}
\]

We get typological adventures on epistolary writing as in the next part:

\[
\text{THE GIST}
\]

\[
\text{credit} : \text{the gist}
\]

\[
\text{IN venshun}
\]

\[
\text{O. KAY}
\]
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.

The 'local controlling of local purchasing power' has become the urgent need of our
times also, since what we find now is the multinational grip stifling the local and
indigenous. The sweeping
curri?nls
of globalization and liberalization have but
precipitated this, although ‘the surface glistens’ with lures of ‘global village’ and ‘global
progress.’ Williams’ ideas on empowerment of the local thus resonate through time.

This poetic collage obviously defies all rational logic and gives a wide berth to the
‘irrational,’ illogical anomaly of life. Yet, by juxtaposing it with the overall theme we can
take it as a remedy that is offered. The reader can eke out meaning from the
dissonance of words if he is interested. The economic stasis can be countered by the
concept of credit, the power latent in money and it is "the radiant gist" against all that
scants our lives." An analogy has been developed between credit and radium which
alike possess enormous powers of transformation. If society could grant credit for
important work, ‘usury’ would disappear. Williams saw social credit as a form of
individual empowerment and restructuring of economic system that would provide the
objective structures for greater control and power by individuals. In his book William
Carlos Williams and the Diagnostics of Culture, Brian A. Bremen argues that “social
credit became the ‘gist’ of Williams’s notion of culture as a ‘whole way of life’. "17 The
democratic principle of social credit – of making available the increases in productivity made possible by increases in technology in the form of credit to be used equally by all citizens – appealed to Williams.

The elaboration grows discursive and loose and ends up at last in another reference to the 'radiant gist': credit as radium, the 'gist' of the ore (pitch blende), the latent power, destructive of the old categories and creating the new. Louis L. Martz in his essay on "The Unicorn in Paterson," explores something of the Poundian diatribe in this 'Money-Joke' passage:

Here is a section composed in something like Pound's broken multicultural style, with expressions in Hebrew, Spanish and German along with very crude American slang: and including too some allusions to the Parthenon, Phidias and Pallas Athene – all this ending with an overt echo of Pound's unmistakable epistolary style

In

venshun^{18}

The Poundian echo is there obviously, yet Williams merges these themes of money and credit with the finely woven interlay of metaphors that reach for a kind of solid yet elusive reality. Williams had already dwelt up on this theme (not so elaborately as it is here) in the previous books when he referred to the meaningless, money making measures devised by Hamilton. In fact he couldn't 'shun' this reality in the process of writing the poem.

Critics take polemical stance in commenting on this aspect. In a rather severe critique of the second, third and fourth books, Randell Jarrell, who had previously
expressed almost boundless admiration for Book I, lamented the introduction of this material on credit and usury, "those enemies of man, God and contemporary long poems." In Partisan Review, Jarrell writes, "The least impressive passages in Paterson are those in which a passionate promulgation of money theories come perilously close to being mere harangue." Critics like Joel Connaroe justify the presence of this part as something relevant to Paterson. He writes in William Carlos Williams' Paterson: Language and Landscape:

Williams' ideas on money and credit, as digressive and presumptuous as they sometimes seem to be, are actually tied with the other major themes in the poem. Furthermore they represent the culmination of a long and energetic protest against a system that sanctions private use of public money.

The invading chaos, arising from the disappearance of the image of an orderly universe broken up by the discoveries of modern physics and further fragmented by the socio-political turbulences which led to World War I, were the harsh realities modernists strove hard to contain in their private mythographies. The Yeatsian vision, the Joycean adoption of Vico’s philosophy of history, Lawrencian deification of flesh and religion of blood, and Eliot’s mythical Christian scaffolding of the Grail legend, were all the shores banked against the engulfing confusion and entropy of the spreading urban civilization. While Pound counters this influx through his economics, Williams treatment foreshadows the postmodern, post absurd, post industrial approach which amounts to zero degree interpretation. It engrosses a reality of a technetronic society where fact
and fiction converge and only a collage of different facet planes can expose this multi-layered nature of experience.

A Closure with Nascent Openings: Book IV Section 3

The call of the sea, 'the sea that sucks in all rivers' reverberates the whole arena of this last section of Book IV. Williams leaves a wide margin for the reader to grasp the concept of the sea. Since meaning gets endlessly deferred, and grows incomplete in the very process of its exploration, this sea of Paterson sucks the reader in and offers him ample choice and selection. Like postmodern Surfiction, the mode of discourse is digressive, digressive from the element that precedes and the element that follows.21 This offers multiple possibilities of rearrangement in the process of reading. It can turn self-reflexive, and be in a perpetual state of redoubling upon itself. The reader negotiates with it, partaking of its interrogation, an endless interrogation of what it is doing while doing it. In Paterson, the reader is constantly reminded of the process of the poem, the search for the language that makes Paterson the poem of a poem. This section opens on that note:

Haven't you forgot your virgin purpose,

the language?

What language? “The past is for those who lived in the past,” is all she told me. (219)

Time is no frame to confine this process; as Williams wrote and cancelled it from the Yale collection, “today is tomorrow is yesterday /is time reversed, circuitous.”22 This section describing the last stage of ‘The Run to The Sea’ is neither a conclusion nor a continuation. It leaves an open-ended edge into the ever growing, encircling, impalpable
reality. The end and beginning are embedded within each other, an "interpenetration both ways."

Williams’ awareness of this predicament is very clear in his letter to Jose Gracia Villa (SL291-292):
A cold east wind, today, that seems to blow from the other side of the world – seems at the same time to be blowing all poetry out of life. A man wonders why he bothers to continue to write. And yet it is precisely then that to write is most imperative for us. That, if I can do it, will be the end of Paterson, Book IV. The ocean of savage lusts in which the wounded shark gnashes at its own tail is not our home.

It is seed that floats to shore, one word, one tiny, even microscopic word, is that which alone can save us.

Originally Section 3 was intended to have been the conclusion of Paterson. Its pre-occupation with the theme of death (several references in prose and poetry to murder) and its metaphorical dimensions (as the sea that sucks in every thing) point to a termination, the inevitable failure of a poem as the canvas of life and the failure of the poet to find the adequate measure. But the long poem also presents the birth of a poem. Paterson wakens from a dream, the dream of the whole poem emerges from the devastating sea, 'headed inland followed by a dog.’ As William himself puts it,” He will finally die but it cannot be categorically stated that death ends anything.”(IWWP, 22) Like Walt Whitman, it is the poet identifying himself with America, to indulge in a 'new construction up on syllables.'
The publication of *Paterson* V, after seven years as the continuation of *Paterson* IV, revived the critical debate about the nature and even the existence of the poem's unity. Addition of the fifth book has been defended by several critics who cite Williams belief in 'open form.' Walter Sutton in “Dr. Williams’ ‘Paterson’ and the Quest for Form,” writes:

The addition of another part or an indefinite number of parts is in accord with Dr. William's theory of the poem. For to him the whole of *Paterson*, or of any poem, can be construed as a search for an adequate form, a search that is always advancing, as it must advance, in time, but that is never completed.  

Williams thus involves himself in a process which is the world we live in. There is a short prose paragraph dealing with the search for measure, a language that can revive us. It tells of killing the sentence, breaking formal syntax to expand meaning (222). The ensuing verse narration is the very act of this: it comes in the form of nostalgic recollections of Williams' grandmother:

She used to call me her country bumpkin

Now she is gone I think

of her as in Heaven

She made me believe in

it a little

Where else could she go ?

There was
Something grandious
about her. (222)

This breaking down of formal sentence is in keeping with the abandonment of conventional metre in favour of the variable feet.

A sense of the Herculean nature of the task is heavy on the consciousness. This kind of scattering and holding together is no easy job:

Weakness,
weakness dogs him, fulfillment only
a dream or in a dream. No one mind

can do it all. [...] (224)

This section teems with historical reminiscences. With an appreciative nostalgia, a major section of the poem registers an entirely different style of narration. The tone is quiet and matter of fact with long lines and a heavy reliance on run-overs. It is the talk of an old man in whose eyes history continues to live breaking the barriers of time and space. The nine-page manuscript of the Yale draft, paragraph 2 reads:

The little story of Paterson – The city of Paterson owes much of its importance to its historical associations. So to the past this little volume is dedicated. Although it is not written simply to give facts, it does give correct facts about what it says. 24

Facts as memories conjure up an idyllic picture of nineteenth century Paterson. It is the Paterson of shaded trees under the Falls, where the rural folk gather round the ring show of the country circus, held in the triangle square, the breathing spot of the village.
In the evenings when the mill stopped work, the town turned out to the circus. See how the verse weaves out a lurid past:

It was lighted
in those days by candles especially
made for the show. [. . .]

The giant candles
were placed on the bottom boards, and two
rows of small candle one above the other
tapering to a point, forming a very pretty
scene and giving plenty of light.

(231)

These reminiscences are interrupted by a sudden influx of the element of the bizarre. There is the police report of a criminal, charged with the murder of his six months’ old daughter, Nancy, by snapping the wooden tray of high chair into the baby’s face; the ruthless killing of John S. Van Winkle and his wife, an aged couple and the undertaker digging up Peter the Dwarf’s grave.

The thematic connection of death and birth is confirmed by the two passages, one an account of the murder of John S. Van Winkle and the other a Dutch lullaby (Trip a trap o’ troontjes) juxtaposed against each other (233). The arbitrariness of death is highlighted, the death of the man in bed, the symbolic death of Paterson and the hanging of the murderer. A conclusion which everybody awaits, ‘the crowd gathered to see a man killed’ is the reader’s expectation of the end of the poem Paterson. It is ‘the sea that sucks in all rivers’, and it is ‘not our home.’ It is our commonsensical nostalgic association, the call of the sea, our ardent yearning for mother Sea echoing in us from
Greek times (from Homer), 'Thalassa immaculate,' "in whom the dead enwombed again / cry out to us to return." The emphatic repetition, "It is not our home" nullifies the conventional expectations and valorizes the end as the beginning. If the sea is Death, it is also Birth, the origin of life. Among "the scum / and wrack / and limp starfish," says Paterson, "seeds float in." (235) The plurality of the voices, "the sea is not our home," and "you must come to it" offer the choice of selection, the way you take life.

The episode ends not with the swimmer or reader being swept helplessly out to sea, but with his emergence from the confused uproar, the return to the beach, where he naps briefly, rises and puts on a pair of faded overalls and a shirt. This emerging Paterson turns "to look back to the waves," and then knock his ears to clear them. After dressing, he turns once more to listen to "the water's steady roar, as of a distant / waterfall" (237). Followed by the dog he headed inland, "toward Camden where Walt Whitman, much traduced, lived the latter years of his life and died." (Autobiography 392) The seed of creativity bequeathed from Walt Whitman persists through time and is to be carried over by Williams and his epigone (people like Allen Ginsberg).

The section ends with these lines:

This is the blast
the eternal close
the spiral
the final somersault
the end.
The 'spiral' nature of the 'somersault' makes this attempt similar to that of Sam Patch and like him the poet also indulges in an activity that is not sheer self-destruction, but an act of exploration, to begin to begin again. Sankey Benjamin (A Companion to William Carlos Williams's Paterson 211) observes that in the symbolism of the conclusion, Williams had specially in mind, the job of continuing Whitman's attack on “the dominance of iambic pentameter in English prosody” and of constructing something "in the new dialect."

Louis L. Martz looks at it differently in his study of "The Unicorn in Paterson":

"Headed inland" – here at the very close, Williams echoes once again his prose preparation for this poem, In The American Grain, for in the closing pages of that earlier book, he had used the same phrasing to describe the achievement of Edgar Allen Poe. "His greatness,"

Williams thus declared, "is in that he turned his back upon everything represented by a Long fellow and faced inland to originality, with the identical gesture of a Boone." And indeed Williams’ account here of Poe’s method in his tales is perhaps the best account of Paterson that we have yet received.25

Paterson is every man, always retuning home and starting out, embodying the world of life, art and nature. Through its minute particulars and wholes, life goes on in its cyclic flow. What renders meaning to life, art and nature is the way it is taken or made available to our psyche. 'The seed that floats to shore, can save us,' and unlike The Waste Land, Paterson sounds a positive note. James E. B. Breslin differentiates both succinctly:
The Waste Land is a kind of anti-epic, a poem in which the quest for meaning is entirely thwarted and we are left, at the end, waiting for the collapse of western civilization. Paterson is a pre-epic, showing that the process of disintegration releases forces that can build a new world. It confronts, again and again, the savagery of contemporary society, but still affirms a creative seed. Eliot’s end is Williams’s beginning.26

"The serpent / its tail in its mouth": Paterson Book V

The Past as an Enriching Present: Section 1

Emerson opened his essay, "Circles" with the ringing annunciation:

The eye is the first circle: the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary figure is repeated with out end. It is the highest emblem in the cipher of the world…. Every action admits of being outdone. Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is another dawn risen on mid-noon, and under ever deep a lower deep opens."27

The predicament of Paterson V is tantamount to this. It engages a reality that is a cutting loose of time from sequences, and indulges in a process of quest, perpetual change, instability and fluidity. What it does is exactly what Charles Altieri characterizes as the pre-occupation of contemporary arts that see themselves as reacting to the formal and cultural values basic to late modernism - for example, by undoing the primacy of optical experience, by shattering formal purity so as to let through the 'noise
of the world,' with all its historical density, by letting form play on the imperative of function, and by cultivating those event qualities within art that creates the mysterious openness that Ihab Hassan calls 'indeterminacy.'

If Books I to IV centre round the city as the locus of unfolding process, Book V correlates art with life. Here is a consciousness that mediates the permanence of art and the transience of life. Instead of the descriptive, epistolary tone of the previous parts, Book V is more meditative, reminiscent, and largely lyrical. The huntsman and unicorn of medieval legend replace the American Indian. The timeless world of imagination reifies a substitute world with unicorns and flowers wherein serpents are gripping their tails in their mouths and the river is returning to its beginnings. Paterson, circling back from the end of the beginning of his career, then bringing himself unto the present again, moves backward and forward so that time is finally washed under. The process of renewal goes on through the encircling lanes of imagination and memory.

While critics like Walter Sutton argue for a case of open-ending by Book IV justifying the inclusion of a fifth or even an "indefinite number of parts," James E. Breslin is of the view that the Paterson of Book V is not the kind of explorer we find at the end of Book IV. He is no longer struggling to get into the position in which to write; he now occupies that position. In his essay, "A Celebration of Light," William Carlos Williams: An American Artist, Breslin writes: "Book V is a coda in which the author reviews earlier episodes and motifs, their discordances now resolved in a new mood of harmonious affirmation. It is also broken into discrete blocks of material, individual parts are still kept separate: their joining occurs as an imaginative process, not as a static fusion." The raw material and the symbolic, wind in and out of the poem.
"contrapuntually." Here Williams welds refined and vulgar idioms, exalted and gross (virgin-whore, satyr-tragedy), to evoke an elusive identity in their contrapunctual play.

In a conversation with Edith Heal, Williams explains how Book V emerged as the inevitable outcome of Book IV (IWWP 22):

Paterson V must be written, is being written and the gulls appear at the beginning. Why must it be written? Paterson IV ends with the protagonist breaking through the bushes, identifying himself with the land, with America. He finally will die but it cannot be categorically stated that death ends anything. When you are through with sex, with ambition, what can an old man create? Art, of course, a piece of art that will go beyond him into the lives of young people, the people who haven’t have time to create. The old man meets the young people and lives on.

What we find here is the reversal of the expectations that Paterson started with. If it was the modernist preoccupation with arbitrary closures and an engagement with universal realities and coherence that motivated Paterson to unwind itself, in Book V we trace a postmodernist rejection of closed world towards ever widening margins and diminishing boundaries. Here we find Williams at the interface of the modern, post modern grasping of reality. Through the ordering hands of the poet, things slip through and indulge in a free play. They necessitate a willing acceptance although the magisterial modernist hovers over Paterson with the Neitzschean ‘will to power.’

Paterson Book V is a good case study of the problematics of a long open poem. By breaking up epic narrator’s voice into a medley of voices and approximating a kind of immediacy with the world of independent objects in the temporal flux, Paterson I to IV...
kept the pace of the Passaic Falls. In Paterson V, the roar of the fall is lost in the air, to become one with the imagination. Here the poet stands at a remove from the processive nature of earlier poetry, holding fast the icon of the past, the permanent world of Brueghel art. Perched on this privileged past, Williams might be seeking the cutting edge to chop out an untrod path, something ‘new.’ That is the predicament of the contemporary poet. He cannot avoid being swallowed up by the temporal flux he is entering into unless and until he can carve a niche of his own, call it self, ego or centre somewhere outside time. As Paul Mariani makes it clear in the essay, "The Eighth day of Creation":

The first four books of Paterson are, really, in a sense, the creation of the first six days, a world caught up very much in the rapid confusion of its own linear, processive time, where the orphic poet like the carnival figure of Sam Patch must keep his difficult balance or be pulled under by the roar of the language at the brink of the descent into chaos every artist encounters in the genesis of creation. What Williams was looking for instead in a fifth book, after resting from his unfolding creation, was to see the river at the heart of the poem as the ourobouros, the serpent with its tail in the mouth, the eternal river, the river of heaven.32

The present is not a separate entity, but a fusion of the past and future. Williams treats the past as an enriching present.

In section I, the consciousness of the poet about the present day reality is up and awake as it was in the previous books. The preoccupation with old age comes out in the opening metaphor.
The typology of the triadic stanza visualizes the crag, the high, steep, sharp or rugged mass of rock which the eagle rebelliously casts off in its onward flight. This eagle is the rebelliously fighting spirit of old age. By the time he wrote Paterson V, Williams had mellowed down; the intermittent strokes were sapping away his energy, but the fire was in him to write, to take off, on the wings of imagination. That was the only way to overpower the creeping senility, to establish continuity and survival. Williams wrote in Author's note to The New Directions Edition of Complete Paterson: "I have come to understand that many things have occurred in me and the world, but I have been forced to recognize that there can be no end to such a story I have envisioned with the terms I had laid down for myself."

The consciousness of Paterson is not weighed down by old age but moves solely in new places of memory. Like the frail rocks and streams reawakened from the long winter sleep, imagination conjures up "A WORLD OF ART THAT THROUGH YEARS HAS SURVIVED!" Book V is dedicated to the memory of Henry Toulouse Lautrec, the painter, because Williams had great admiration for this "artist of the whorehouse." He told this to Walter Sutton in "A Visit with William Carlos Williams."
The tale unfolded in the five hundred year old tapestries in the cloisters, high above the bluffs of Hudson at Fort Tryon Park, and the eleven Tapestries depicting the pursuit of unicorn by the virgin, would provide Williams with a visual inspiration for his own creation of virgin-whore. Characteristically, the unicorn (which appears in early Indian and Near East folklore) is a soft, powerful animal, the medieval being that it could be caught only by a virgin. Allegorising the Incarnation, this legend also became associated with courtly love. The seventh tapestry in the series, showing the unicorn alone, symbolizes Christ Incarnate; the enclosed garden symbolizes both the virgin and the incarnation.

Charles Olson treats Paterson as process in *Ever Green Review* and comments especially on 'the world of art' in Book V.

> There is an objectivity (which, is there not other than anti-matter) which forces you by an unexampled subjectivity of (whom Williams calls) "'I' Paterson, the 'King-self' to bring to you his line." [ . . . ] This is what he is talking about, in caps, in the poem when he says a world of art alone is what has survived since he was young: and that the only thing which escaped the hole of death is 'the imagination' which cannot be fathomed. It is through this hole we escape, through this hole imagination escapes intact. [ . . . ] The poem offers nothing but the path of itself. 'Nothing else is real.'

Thus Williams commits himself to the process of writing out of the frustrating disparity between a fallen outer world of disorder and a more perfect inner world. As William A. Johnson puts it, in "Towards a Redefinition of Modernism," *Boundary 2*, this is the
'dehumanisation' element in modernism which leads Yeats towards Byzantium, Stephen Dedalus' flight into the world of myth in Joyce, the quest for no human order in Eliot and the impulse to theorise in Lawrence. These writers are confronted with two opposed, polar choices of order and disorder which are inverted mirror images of each other. The grim realization of this comes in the emphatic avowal of Williams:

The whore and the virgin, an identity

--- through its disguises

thrash about- but will not succeed in breaking free

an identity

(245)

Yet Williams is able to seek the ground between these polarities, a space that is the excluded middle. In measure which is a form of relativisation, or in dance that orchestrates the static and the dynamic, Williams explores the third possibility. There is no compulsion for order, but a compliance to the disorderly uproar of the Paterson Falls of life, selecting as 'a choice among the measures, the measured dance.'

The interpolated letter from a woman writer tells of flower laden Pennsylvania countryside. In its joyousness, this letter is a bouquet for the poet, sharing his sense of place. "[...] a place is made of memories as well as the world around it" (P 245).

Associations weave out significance to nature, art and life. That which impinges on the consciousness is a totality of memories, objects, ideas and imagination. J. Hillis Mills' helpful insight of the triadic new measure of Williams is pertinent here. In his book Poets of Reality: Six Twentieth-Century Writers, he considers the triadic form as a triumphant reconciliation of the three elements (ground, form and beauty) in perpetual
balance (355). Like a fountain sustained by underground pressure, making charming forms of beauty in the air, and then sinking down to earth to come up again, according to him, each line moves from ground toward form to release a spark of beauty but then falls back, holding all three separately in precarious tension. The virgin whore concept comes out powerfully in these lines:

--the virgin and the whore, which
most endures? the world
of the imagination most endures: (248)

The ground realities of virgin and whore release a spark of beauty, of the apparent anomalies of life which it requires for its fullness, and hangs it in balance or precarious tension with ‘imagination, that endures’ The very form of the triadic and each line or phrase of it gathers this presence in inextricable union.

Words and images are repeated with varying connotations to reinforce the impact. For example,

The unicorn
has no match
[...........................]
the artist
has no peer.
[...........................]

Death
Similarly the image of the hole varies in meaning; "death is a hole, But there is a hole in the bottom of the bag/ Through this hole/ at the bottom of the cavern/ of death . . . / " These metaphors continue to make things of ideas as when death initially personified, ‘wandering in the woods, having no peer’ then becomes a hole, a bag, a cavern.


The dual terms virgin, whore represent polarities of many colours: moral, ideational and psychological. The terms suggest tension between goodness, virtue and purity of spirit (as well as body) on one hand, and on the other, evil, corruption, depravity beyond that of the merely sensuous. Clearly, the ideal is the virgin, and the real (fleshly as well as evil) is the whore, with all the approval and censure those terms evoke.

Rodgers considers the Demeter/ Kore myth as the guiding myth of Williams’ artistic vision which he follows through several permutations like virgin-whore.

Paterson in old age struggles hard to sharpen his faded memory and imagination to get the language of the bare rocks, the song of the fox sparrow, and the running of the streams. Thus by vitalising his sensibility, he reaches a state where the material loss of beauty, virginity, novelty and youth, fade into a willing imaginative identification of the virgin and the whore.

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

The fable of the unicorn, the animal with magic powers, tempted by the maiden into captivity and death get ample illustration in fifteenth century French tapestries.

The expression of her face,

Where she stands removed from the others

- the virgin and the whore,

- an identity,

both for sale

to the highest bidder!

For Williams, the tapestries would incarnate the cycle of his often observed experience in nature and man, life and death, and violation and rebirth.

Paul Mariani in his chapter on, "The Whore / Virgin and the Wounded One-homed Beast," in A New World Naked, explores the fable of the virgin's pursuit and betrayal of the unicorn and Williams' use of the material found in the cloister's tapestries. Like the unicorn, Mariani believes, Williams felt he was hunted by the dogs of his thoughts even as he pursued the dream of the woman, the impossibly beautiful poem. According to Mariani, Williams' retelling of this myth takes the form of the artist's imagination in pursuit of the woman, unabashed naked pursuit after the poem, after the virgin language which must of necessity be whored, mauled, possessed by the lover,
the poet. Thus life and death, innocence and experience, purity and degradation, ideal and real merge into one and survives in the imagination of the artist who immortalizes her in art.

Book V is saved from any self reflexive closure in part by its inclusiveness, by its last indirections. The letter from Allen Ginsberg allows reiteration of Williams' own non-parochial sense of locality, and an excerpt from a prose piece by a young poet who describes the events in a South American whorehouse, one of the whores seen against a white door, "... snow, the virgin, the bride" (250), is couched in a chaotic language set against a refrain of the word FOUR to build up an odd sense of disparity and disintegration.

**Going beyond Monism, Pluralism: Book V Section 2**

Like an eagle that has indeed cast off 'rebelliously from its crag,' Williams moves in a new dimension in Book V. By holding that there is only one basic substance or principle as the ground of reality (monism), Williams had explored the identity in the 'end' and 'beginning' (P 11). But he goes even further, goes beyond even the pluralistic notions (that there is more than one basic substance or principle) of the 'virgin' and 'whore' and reaches a stage in which such conventional opposites as spirit / matter, sacred/ profane, God / creature, and the beauteous and the ugly are resolved and transcended. *Paterson* V becomes a thorough-going engagement to reality, a commitment to process, rather than completeness. As Williams put it in his introduction to *The Collected Later Poems* (7): "One does not seek beauty. All that an artist [. . .] can do is to drive towards his purpose, in the nature of his materials." In this environment the materials enter into a dialectic relationship in which each continuously
transforms the other and none is allowed to establish a tyranny over the other. Mutlu Konuk Blazing In her Art of Life: Studies in American Autobiographical Literature, treats Williams’ poetics as culturally radical. She writes:

In the case of Paterson, the non-poetic provides for Williams very poetics and informs the poet's subject, structure and language. Thus Paterson may be seen as poetry in the process of self-definition: it defines poetry itself, because it embodies the vulgarization of poetic subject, language and structure, and remains poetry. For Williams, beautiful thing is not perfection, but life, whose "vulgarity of beauty surpasses all their / perfections!" There is ground in this argument that Paterson is a radical poem. The reader's confrontation with Paterson becomes a kind of action as well, and the poem requires not merely an intellectual response but a change of consciousness on the reader's part for it to become a poem.

In this section, there is Williams’ version of a poem by Sapho who wrote ‘for a clear tinkling voice.’ This is followed by a letter from Ezra Pound, one of the men with whom the poet set out, both still concerned with economics and politics. From the high poetic planes of Sapho, this is a down to earth landing into contemporary reality. The different metrical experimental strands of Williams are also in vivid display in this section. James Demuth in “William Carlos Williams’ Paterson: A Search for Language, a Recovery of Words,” in The Library Chronicle (Vol. 45), differentiates the two significant metrical experiments of Williams here. According to him, in Williams’ translation of the Sapho passage, Williams is at his furthest departure from variable foot. Here he uses
anapaestic trimeter quatrains. Each stanza however concluding with a line of one foot. Though regular, the metre of the translation is subtly varied by his shortening of several anapaests, by his alliteration of consonantal clusters, and by his skilful continuation of some poetic feet from the end of one line into the syllable or syllables of the succeeding line.

Peer of gods is that man, who face to face, sits listening to your 'sweet speech and 'lovely laughter.

This passage is knit with alliteration and internal assonance.

Straight away, a delicate fire runs in my limbs, my eyes are blinded and my ears thunder

All this evoke the musical rhythm of Sapho's 'clear gentle tinkling voice' - “the silence that is in the starry sky” as Williams describes it as her tone, in the prose introduction to this.

Juxtaposed against this lyrical expression is a deliberately prosaic poetic passage in wholly American idiom.

The woman in our town Walks rapidly, flat bellied In worn slacks.
There is only the breath rhythm with no accentual pattern. It is as James Demuth puts it, "variable foot verse with least variety." He writes:

Only occasionally does Williams poetize his verse by isolating one word, thus forcing to pause to what is otherwise a reading of prose. This technique shows increased subtlety in *Paterson* V [. . .]. Though the "world of art" emblazoned on the opening pages of *Paterson V* seems to seal the world of *Paterson*, I think Williams achieved a truer image of the city in this 'museum' than in the 'mausoleum' of the automaton's local history. Paterson I to IV is laden with history but reads as fantasy. Williams too easily and frequently lapses into simple contrasts, of the sacred primitives and the 'debased city.' Assuming that the 'raw new' is destroyed (You come today to see killed / killed, killed), the poet finds little to create in the present, the Passaic Falls, Williams' symbol of the uninterpreted 'raw new' in Paterson, begins and ends simply a roar. In fact in *Paterson V* Williams sets aside the futile quest of the earlier books. He accepts (humbly, as his self-image of the poet-craftsman indicates) the 'American idiom' as an authentic cultural expression and probes its structure. By this acceptance he opens the real world of *Paterson*. (157-58)

On the other side, there is Kathleen Woodward in "William Carlos Williams and 'Paterson V' Traditional and Individual Talent," arguing that Williams' stance in Book V (relating art with life) becomes first and foremost a means of personal salvation, not a vehicle for raising an American culture. She writes that Williams here decorates a substitute world of unicorns and flowers, and a grim reaper and serpents gripping their
tales in their mouths, as though, they were so many paintings to be hung on the wall in the text. She writes in her book, *At Last, The real Distinguished Thing: The Late poems of Eliot, Pound, Stevens and Williams:

There is something, in other words, curiously unconvincing about *Paterson V* [. . ] Williams cut off from his life long concept of himself, divorced from the ground (the sexual) and thus divorced from his native culture (the American Grain) sought himself outside himself, never reaching a still point from which he could include the universe. This was his failure but his courage was also in this: the infirmities of the age demanded that he do what he had not done before, and confronting those weaknesses, he invented something new.39

If *Paterson V* can be seen and studied as a contemporary writer's stress and struggle to address the overwhelming reality that knows no bounds, without getting enmeshed in it, the confines of 'native' or 'local' will not fit in to the picture. We find a process of Williams' self-consciousness growing maximum with maximum immediacy to occupy an imaginative space.

The section ends with the transcript of a portion of Mike Wallace's interview with Williams, with Williams' cryptic comment, "Anything is good material for poetry."

**Dance as Performance, Participation: Book V Section 3**

This section is a fine blend of spatio-temporal historicity. The Brueghel painting of nativity (the adoration of Kings, 1564, in the National Gallery, London) is an adequate trope to renew the future out of the past. Brueghel saw the subject 'from both sides,' a true painter and not a partisan:
Peter Brueghel the artist saw it from two sides: the imagination must be served — and he served dispassionately. (265)

The details in the painting, the armed men, the baby in an authentic pose, the three men who come 'to propitiate their Gods' make up the 'bustle of the scene.' The present age, "the age of the shoddy."(266) is set off against the kind of poverty represented in the painting. The theme of money and poverty is a recurring theme in Williams. Williams cannot lose sight of the hard realities of an imperfect contemporary culture. Joel Conarroe in William Carlos Williams' Paterson: Language and Landscape, observes:

It is completely in keeping with the nature of Book V, however, that it should resurrect the economic motif (in a minor way) and put it in a new perspective. This book, I have already suggested, differs in mood and setting from the four that precede it. It does however develop many of the themes and images that loom large in the earlier sections. Thus it is quite logical for the old poet, in looking back at his world from the vantage point of art and age, to refocus on the economic chaos that had previously occupied so much of his thought. He is in this final book giving the world of the poem imaginative validity. He has not, however, lost sight of the hard realities of an imperfect civilization.40

Poverty existed in the time of Brueghel, and it exists as a timeless factor (in Williams' and our times also). The concern with economics is carried along in a letter Williams
prints from a friend describing conditions in some of the countries of post war Europe (229-30).

The Brueghel painting with the weight of the past, stands for the permanence of art and of the world of imagination. Its text is only a surface of analogical intersections weaving out a tapestry of meaning. This kind of resurrection of the past does not mean that Williams the poet, here at the fag end of his writing, is giving up all his set notions of immediacy, of 'no ideas but in things.' What we find is a mellowed world view where the past becomes a realization, to place himself in the shifting shores of the present that moves towards the future. Definitely, Williams is not doing what Walt Whitman described in his 1885 “Preface” to the edition of Leaves of Grass, referring to the relationship of the American poet to the past, “He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet,”41 On the other hand Williams fills up the gaps between the realities of the past, the present, and the potentialities of the future.

On the axis of the contiguity (of the religious motive), a Version of St. Mathew is inserted and it is followed by a letter from Edward Dahlberg. The Virgin Whore concept, the one and the same entity is mooted through reference to Mother Mary, the immaculate and inviolable, and her divine conception. In the succeeding verse section the speaking subject which had served as a marginal presence merges into the poet-self.

Edward

Paterson has grown older

the dog of his thoughts

has shrunk

(268)
Edward Paterson, grown older, now resigns himself to a life of 'tending his flower garden, cutting his grass' and trying to get the young (poets like Ginsberg) to 'foreshorten their errors in the use of words' (268). This is the somber self of Williams, "— learning with age to sleep my life away" (277). Paul Mariani (A New World Naked 725–47) describes how towards the evening of his life, due to continuous strokes, Williams found it difficult to do serious writing and confined his work mainly to replying letters, that too with the help of Flossie, his wife.

The ageing body is still enraptured by the particular flowers, the non visual details of the tapestries like the stench of horses, yelping of dogs, and the woods that are cold though in summer. Like the unicorn 'penned by a low wooden fence', the poetic self cannot escape the encircling reality and beauty. To ground oneself in the present reality becomes an oscillation backward and forward:

The (self) direction has been changed

the serpent

its tail in its mouth

"the river has returned to its beginnings"

and backward

(and forward)

it tortures within me

until time has been washed finally under:

and I knew all (or enough)

it became me (271)
John Lowney in his book *The American Avant Garde Tradition* has written about the enormous potentiality of the 'apostrophe' which according to him functions in post-enlightenment poetry as a strategy for overcoming the alienation of the subject from the object (35). Williams achieves the same end here by using brackets when he refers to "I knew it all (or enough) / it became me . “ Here is the merging of the "I," the "Paterson - the King self", and the world of objects that make the composite world of art that alone can survive. The spaced out period also accommodates the fusion to relieve the tensions of subject -object polemics. Like the unicorn that suffers death but transcends death, these polarities, virgin/whore, subject/object, traditions as canons and difference as canon revisions merge and mediate to occupy a new territory, the realm of contemporaneity. Williams goes further than the pluralistic realization of "-the virgin and the whore, /an identity,” (276); the Paterson composite self consoles itself on, "the measure intervenes, to measure is all we know" (277), only to come to the futility of all knowledge:

We know nothing and can know nothing

but

the dance, to dance to a measure

ccontrapuntally,

Satyrically, the tragic foot. (278)

The dance embraces the joyous and the tragic, the endless dance of life. Here is a consciousness that merges with the readers' in the grim realization that ours is an engagement to the reality in the crucible of which everything is just dancing to the measure hoping to escape through the 'hole' of death.
Dance, the kinetic activity of fusion, of the fragmentary, transient, contingent layers of experience sedimentered through myth and ritual, is the apt means to transform and transcend the quotidian. No wonder poets employ the dance imagery as central to their perception. The dance imagery in Williams affords space for permanence in his travail through the tawdry world of Paterson, the past and the present, the mind and the facts, in search of 'the beautiful thing', 'the radiant gist.' Significant dancing occurs in several parts of Paterson, in the primitive Indian dance, the Kinte Kaye (the death dance), the old hag’s dance on the Sunday in the Park, and in Williams’ prose fragment, Mezz Mezzrow’s account of the Blues. The Blues and the Jazz depended on a delicate balance between form and variation – a pattern, Williams absorbed to the full in his conception of the ‘triadic line.’ Audrey T. Rodgers in Universal Drum makes a cryptic analysis on the dance imagery in Paterson:

Except for the gyrations of the prostitutes, “high heels, click, click,” who have no sense of their own innocence in the stench of the city, dancing in Williams’ Paterson conjures up the multiple associations inherent in his dance from earlier notions of “Persephone gone to hell.” Dance is the efficacious activity of the Gods, the deities of fertility and plentitude: Dionysus, Pan, Priapus, the satyrs who dance their tragic deformities into the graceful, the “beautiful thing.” Dance is intrinsic to the motions of the river, the falls, the flow of time turning back ends to beginnings. Dance is the rite and play of the primitive man who had the sense of integration lost to the modern, fragmented world. And finally dance is the measure, the rhythmic pattern of all art that encloses the past and present into a
permanent enduring reality\textsuperscript{42}

Dance thus offers Williams a safe standpoint in the overwhelming flux, a new dimension of time and space defying origins and ends, a centreless centre.
Notes

1Mutlu Konuk Blazing, “Two Poets: ‘Paterson,’ Notes Toward an American Revolution, Frank O’Hara and the Poetics of Love,” in her Art of life: Studies in American Autobiographical Literature (Texas: Texas UP, 1977), 114. She discusses that only the city has the potential to withstand the destructiveness of technological society, which conceives of time as speed and of history as obsolescence.

2David Walker, THE TRANSPARENT LYRIC (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), 21. Walker proposes that the protagonist of many of the poems of Williams and Stevens is not the speaker of the poems, but the reader. In imitating the process of thinking, of confronting the world, the poem engages the reader in a different way of form; he is led to see the world in a particular way.


6Roger Seamon, “The Bottle in the Fire: Resistance as Creation in William Carlos William’s Paterson,” The Merrill Studies in Paterson, comp. John Engels (Ohio: Merrii, 1971) 39. Seamon argues that Williams eschews the traditional patterns of ordering experience to accomplish the task of ‘letting the world have its say’ in the poem. Thus even the cast away bottle is significant and the designs left on it are in immediate contact with the world.

8 Quoted in James E. Miller, Jr. “How Shall I be a Mirror to This Modernity? William Carlos Williams’s ‘Paterson’” *American Quest for a Supreme Fiction: Whitman’s Legacy in the Personal Epic* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1979) 142.

9 Sankey Benjamin 137.

10 William Carlos Williams, *Contact I* (December 1920): 10. Another reference to Dada by Williams is in *Contact V* (June 1923): 2, in which he compares the “disjointed Dada composition” with Spencer’s “Epithalamion,” “a most beautiful thing, all of one piece.”


15 Michael Foucault, “The Subject and Power” reprinted as “Afterword” in Michael Foucault; *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul

16Sankey Benjamin, A Companion To William Carlos Williams's Paterson 177.

17Brian A. Bremen, William Carlos Williams and the Diagnostics of Culture (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993)187. The author is of the view that the empowerment of the individual is the ‘radiant gist’ of Williams culture, and as such Paterson maps out the strategies to break down those forces that block the flow of communication, credit, poetry and knowledge.


21See Raymond Federman, “Surfiction: A Postmodern Position,” in Critifiction: Postmodern Essays (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993) 35-47. Federman dwells on the proposition that no meaning preexists language, hence, postmodern Surfiction will not attempt to be meaningful, truthful, or realistic a priori. Seemingly it will be devoid of meaning, it will be deliberately illogical, irrational, non-sequitur, digressive and incoherent. It will refute resolution and closure.

22Quoted by Charles Doyle, William Carlos Williams and The American Poem
(London: Macmillan, 1982) 189, from Yale 186 /3. Doyle writes: "His insistence of the value of the thing in itself is important in Williams; but even more important is his sense of process."

23 Quoted by James E. B. Breslin, William Carlos Williams: An American Artist (New York: Oxford UP, 1970) 205, from Walter Sutton, "Dr. Williams' Paterson and the Quest for Form" 242, or the same essay in Merrill Studies in Paterson 44.

24 Quoted in Doyle136


30 Walter Sutton, "William Carlos Williams: Paterson and Later Poems," American Free Verse: The Modern Revolution in Poetry (New York: New Directions, 1973) 150. Sutton is of the opinion that Paterson is more truly modern than The Waste Land or The Bridge because there is a refusal to accept doctrinaire theories or solutions. In it,
"while insisting upon the authenticity of his own vision, Williams has at the same time insisted upon the relativity of all knowledge and the inadequacy of dogma."


35 William A. Johnson, "Towards a Redefinition of Modernism," Boundary 2.1-3 (Spring 1974): 539-54. He points to the hazardous task of defining modernism: "Infact we cannot adequately define our period style, until we understand the dynamic of modernism, for every effort to finish off modernism becomes another modernism."


42 Audrey T. Rodgers, "William Carlos Williams," The Universal Drum: Dance Imagery in the Poetry of Eliot, Crane, Roethke, and Williams (London: The Pennsylvania UP, 1979) 181. The author projects the view that the ‘potentiality’ of the dance, hidden yet present in the prosaic world we live in, is like the poem waiting to be discovered, to be recognized, and it is like the 'radiant gist' in the 'pitchblende.'