Chapter VI

Paterson Book VI

"Words are the burden of poems, poems are made of words"

A poet's encounter with the world is the expression of it through language. The very language of the poet is a crystallization of his experience, something that breathes of his being as a signature of his presence or existence. Heidegger in "Nature of Language" (59), describes how a poet is compelled — in his own way, that is, poetically — to put into language, the experience he undergoes with language. To undergo an experience with language, writes Heidegger:

means that something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms and transforms us [. . .]. The experience is not our own making, to undergo here means that we endure it, suffer it, receive it, as it strikes us, and submit to it [. . .].

To undergo an experience with language, then means to let ourselves be properly concerned by the claim of language by entering into and submitting to it. If it is true that man finds the proper abode of his existence in language whether he is aware of it or not — then an experience he undergoes with language will touch the innermost nexus of our existence. 1

The poet who ventured on "a new construction upon the syllables" (Autobiography 392), cannot resist the zest for the word-the world even in Book VI which trails along after Book V: "Words are the burden of poems, poems are made of / words"(281).
Book VI continues from the fringes of Paterson V, as a thin end of a wedge, that surfaces, wanes, and resurfaces to reach out to the eternal and endless. The fragments of a projected sixth part of Paterson were found among Dr. Williams' papers after death. In fact, the poet found it difficult to confine Paterson, the world within the word, into the microchip of a long poem.

Here is a sensibility merging into the consciousness of a self "intimately named as the genius."

You knew the Falls and read Greek fluently

it did not stop the bullet that killed you -- close after dawn

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

--you wanted to organize the country so that we should all

stick together and make a little money

a rich man

John Jay, James Madison let's read about it! (281)

The space between John Madison and the period is the space allotted to many a man who can join the group. Williams himself 'wanted to organize his country' through anchoring experience and expression on the truly American soil. Here the poem becomes the fund of the experience of the community; the experience that a community is calling forth. Efforts made to organize or reorganize might entail risk, 'cannot stop the bullet from killing you.' Yet the endeavour has to go on. The lines project a potential past that is a possible present. The meaningful period after the gap and the expression 'let's read about it,' is a meta commentary on these endeavours.
Confessing its embeddedness in time, its own finiteness, the ensuing lines are dated on 1/8/61; it is a medley of mixed images and objects. What we get is a bricolage, a liberal use of fragments of preexisting literary material, disregarding specialization, as that in post modern fiction which creates a work of art that emphasizes newness rather than originality. There is the dandelion, the lion’s tooth, art of domestic husbandry, royal blue carving, an abstract design of a Chinese poet who drowned embracing the reflection of the moon in the river. There is also the reference to the pantomime with the image of a frosty elm outlined. All these work out an abstract design without design. The last part reiterates the theme of dance as an ultimate rite, an act of survival against the insubstantiality of life and death.

Dance, dance! loosen your limbs from that art which holds you
Faster than the drugs which hold you faster – dandelion on my bedroom wall.

This voluntary willing participation can diffuse the self from the bondage of subject–object predicament and place it on a plane that is free from the burden of interpretation, representation or imitation. This participation in the wild disorder of life is tantamount to the ‘performance’ aspect of the postmodern. What Ihab Hassan characterizes as “carnivalisation” in postmodernism is a participation in the wild disorder of life. A postmodern text invites performance; it wants to be written, revised, answered and acted out. To survive one has to, as in Cummings’ terms ‘sing his didn’t and dance his did.’ This dance of survival accommodates the noise of the world which echoes through time, instilling in us a profound intuition as that recognized by Wallace Stevens, “We
live in a place / That is not our own and, much more, not ourselves. This only enables us to be fully alive and creative. James Guimond puts it clearly:

To be fully alive and creative [. . .] men must be open and receptive to everything around them. They cannot ignore any of the material forces inside or outside themselves, no matter how, alien or destructive [. . .] disorder also feeds art. The potentiality of the dance is hidden yet present in the world we live in. Only the poet or the genius of a Madam Curie can recognize ‘the radiant gist’ in the ‘pitchblende,’ working out a new system of relations, making the past a productive cutting edge, and by focusing on the particular and the particularized.

We get a schizophrenic mix of collage or bricolage in the rest of Paterson VI. There is ‘Dada or murders of / a Stalin / or a Lipo / or an obscure Montezuma / or a forgotten Socrates or Aristotle before the destruction of the library of Alexandria’. Genres mix up and prose and verse are in absurd combination. We experience the tensions and oppositions of the dance of differences working towards a meaningful meaninglessness. The contingent world is simply accepted for what it is; it belongs to the postmodern hyper space where every thing turns technetronic and where the very act of living is the art of living. The boundaries between fact and fiction mix and merge in to each other. There is no end to such a free play of the Paterson epic.

In his essay, “Decentering the Image: The “Project “ of “American” Poetics?” Joseph N. Riddel writes:

This freedom from the commanding origin, this play of originating forces, informs the modern long poem. The praxis of the moving image puts in
question the idea of the unified or autotelic text, or the thinking of poetic
closure. It also resists the possibility of a text commanded by any one of its
elements: a controlling theme, a privileged point of view, authorial
intentionality, image cluster, or central symbol.6

The skeins of Williams poetics has been taken up by an enthusiastic epigone of
writers. The post world war second avant garde, including the Beat generation, The
Black mountain Poets, and the New York School, has a strong sense of continuity.
These artists think of themselves as the continuers of the pre world war radical
modernists. In his “Introduction to the Moderns” (1963, XI) Amiri Baraka
makes a frank acknowledgement:

The concerns that made contemporary avant-garde poetry seem so new
were merely that the writers who were identified with this recent poetic
renaisance were continuing the tradition of twentieth century
modernism that had been initiated in the early part of this century. William
Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, the imagists and the French Symbolist
poets were restored to importance as beginners of a still vital tradition of
Western poetry. It was an attempt to restore American poetry to the
mainstream of modern poetry after it had been cutoff from that tradition by
the Anglo-Eliotic domination of the academies.7

Amiri Baraka was influenced not only by the contemporary avant-garde, especially
Charles Olson and Allen Ginsberg, but also by their ‘spiritual fathers,’ the pre world
war I modernists, especially Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams.
When standing on the changing, slippery shores of random ungraspable reality, contemporary writer cannot but produce something that is discontinuous, fragmentary and heterogeneous. Williams wrote to Henry Wells in April 1950 (SL 286), "The poem to me (until I go broke) is an attempt, an experiment, a failing experiment, toward assertion with broken means, but an assertion, always, of a new and total culture, the lifting of an environment to expression." Each moment of this environment in all its newness and vividness has to be captured by making mind and the poem open, accepting everything unselectively without closure. Just as life pulsates with the pressures and pleasures of anticipation, the open poem pulsates with the aleatory and the contingent to sustain curiosity. Williams thus points to the inevitability of open-endedness that gives a wide berth to the word, the world, the writer and the reader. Pleasure accrues out of the participation in the game.

Both Charles Olson and Robert Duncan made the open form more vivid to capture the fleeting moments of reality. Their ideal of life was to be wholly responsive to each moment as it comes, to possess continually what Olson called "point by point vividness." Every moment of life, Olson said, is an attempt to come to life and life has no other purpose. The end as Olson puts it in "Human Universe," is "you, this instant, in action." The long poem treats the poems not as separate compositions, but as moments in one ongoing composition. The versification is free, wide variations in length of successive lines mark the absence of any norm. Lineation follows the writer's natural breathing, where the voices pause for breath, the lines break. For Williams also 'the measure' was the breath unit. Olson believed that the line came from breath, from the breathing of the man who writes it at the moment that he writes.
The open poets break the line just whenever they feel it right. Their diction may be rhetorical, learned or extremely colloquial, but defying any particular norm. The changing diction enacts a moral stance of living in the 'moment' and staying open to anything. There is the use of open syntax, tenses are ‘kicked around’(as Olson would put it) and pronouns are inconsistent with the words they govern. Incomplete clauses and dangling phrases, predicates without subjects, antithesis without the opposing terms and interjections provide a free floating medley. Olson writes, “One perception must immediately and directly lead to a further perception [. . .] ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION [. . .] One perception must must must MOVE, INSTANTER, ON ANOTHER.” For example for a line, “the bow spirit is like the beak of a bird and goes in,” Olson writes: “in ! in ! the bow spirit, the bird, the beak.19 Olson uses the metaphor of the poem as a field and all the syllables that make it up are imagined as points in space, all bearing upon one another. Each point within the field is a node of intersecting vectors. Thus creative process is ‘listening’, attention to the immediate minim of the work and its openness.

David Perkins, in “Open Form,” A History of Modern Poetry: Modernism and After (487), argues that the theories of 'open form' were derived from the actual methods of Paterson and Pound’s Cantos although none of these long poems were deliberately created in this way. He considers Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, Denise Levertov, AL Purdy, David Ray, Ramon Guthrie and Josephine Miles as poets continuing the legacy of Williams. Even the poets of The New York School and The San Francisco School who composed with rapid spontaneity to shock traditional readers by their dissolution of form, their subject matter, and their moral and philosophic attitudes which would seem
nihilistic, were influenced by Whitman, Lawrence, Williams and Pound. They strongly reacted against New critical trends. They include Frank O’Hara, John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, James Schuyler, Allen Ginsberg, Ted Berrigan (New York School) and Thom Gunn, Helen Adams, Brother Antonius Gregory Corso and others.

In The Special View of History (given as lectures in 1956, published in 1970) Charles Olson states, "process - what Heraclitus tried on as 'flux'- is reality," and the poet’s job is to write about the flux (42). Olson believed that reality is an unceasing process which undermines all static achievements. Hence all pre conceived forms, in fact all closure is unfaithful to reality. Art must commit itself to process, open form. As Williams believed, the poet has to 'seize the moment.' Paterson thus maps out the contours of contemporary experience. Here the art process is more important than the art object. Paterson is not a product, but a process of writing Paterson. It emerges in a naive way without any effort from Williams whose later poetics was mainly anti-artefactual. He allowed the words to flow freely like the falls of Paterson ("Write carelessly, so that nothing that is nothing that is not green will survive"). Williams focused on "formlessness" as a new poetic potential to establish a rapport with the changing times. In his efforts on "renewal," revitalization of language, he was approximating a speech of the times which had meaningful bearing on the time’s reality.

Williams thus resists aesthetic closure by refusing to allow the conclusion to seem in retrospect required by the beginning and by keeping expectations endlessly deferred. This problematises our efforts to distinguish the process and the product. What is foregrounded is a charming illusion of free play that matches our times.
“no poem but the world”: Conclusion

A postmodern text defies conclusions and apropos of this is the meaninglessness of concluding a study of Williams whose poetic oeuvres and aspirations expand beyond boundaries and make dizzying catapults through time. This study seeks to explore how Williams’ later poetics transcends the confines of modern-postmodern territories to reach out to the world. Taking Paterson the long poem as a focus of study, an effort is made here to seek the provenance of the post modern aesthetics in the modernist preoccupations and practices. A seminal, sensitive poet like Williams, imbied to the full the pressures and suffocation of the modernist ‘prison house’ (to borrow a term from Frederic Jameson)\textsuperscript{10}, wherein creativity craved for a way out breaking all kinds of closure. But Williams’ way to freedom was not a sheer letting loose of all bondages (as it is in the case with his’ variable foot’), but a kind of freedom that knew it’s boundaries. In a way Williams’ poetry problematises the modernist as well as the post modernist preoccupations, the possibilities of control and that of disorder. He confronts the dilemma of countering the flux, without getting drowned in it; keeping maximum immediacy, maximum self-consciousness.

Williams’ poetics maps the contours of contemporary experience in all its reality. In Paterson it grows into an endless interrogation of what it is doing while doing it:

"Haven’t you forgot your virgin purpose,
the language
(P 219)

The language or the measure, is Williams’ paradigm for experience crystallized in expression. Punctuated with prose interludes, the formal surface of Paterson is also fractured repeatedly by shifts among various verse arrangements: long lines, short
lines: verse paragraphs, unrhymed couplets, tercets, quatrains, triadic stanzas, sapphics, and short rhymed songs. Words are fragmented, lines are fragmented, pages are fragmented, sections are fragmented. As it is the case with his ‘triadic line,’ there is a three-fold division of each book. Probably the three-fold vision of entity was strong in him. With the Book VI projected as unfinished, the whole Paterson is a fragment projected into the ‘timeless’ sensibility of posterity.

Towards the end of Book I, a quotation from John Addington Symond’s Studies of the Greek Poets (1880) is appended where a reference to the deformed and mutilated verse Choliambi (lame or limping iambic) used by Hipponax is made. In a letter Williams wrote to John Holmes six years after the publication of Book I (SL 315-16), Williams makes clear how this kind of hunchbacked and limping verse maps the vicissitudes of contemporary experience with all its moral miasma and decadence:

What shall we say more of the verse that is to be left behind by the age we live in if it does not have some of the marks the age has made upon us, its poets? The traumas of today, God knows, are plain enough upon our minds. Then how shall our poems escape? They should be horrible things, those poems. To the classic muse their bodies should appear to be covered with sores. They should be hunchbacked, limping. And yet our poems must show how we have struggled with them to measure and control them. And we must SUCCEED even while we succumb, ...

The fragmented body of Paterson is a venue for “antagonistic co operation” a term Williams uses (P 208) borrowing it from Hyman Levy’s *A Philosophy of Modern Man* (1938). But by allying itself with the ‘farraginous’ tradition (use of fragments and
truncated quotations) of the *Cantos*. Williams' all-out effort is not to jettison unity in favour of a willing admission of farrago, but to put them to the willed (Niczechean), selection of details (local) that spaces out the possibilities of the general.

Williams poetics involves in an empathic act of discovery that respects the other in the self and the self in the other. This poetic space is a field of self-creation and identification in which both the poet and reader recognize their own otherness and identity. The reader has to make out his place in the medley of voices\(^{11}\) that reverberate the Paterson landscape. The dialectic tension of opposites, of antagonistically co-operating voices accommodates the reader's role. For Williams, the poem should engage the world, and bring it with all its rippling surface on its canvas:

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\begin{align*}
\text{The province of the poem is the world} \\
\text{when the sun rises, it rises in the poem} \\
\text{and when it sets darkness comes down} \\
\text{and the poem is dark. (P 122)}
\end{align*}
\]

While proceeding with the Paterson epic Williams allowed himself to loosen from the modernist preoccupation with objective formulation and design, to take the world in its stride. But towards the end, *Paterson*, inspite of its democratic inclusiveness exhibits a tendency towards reaching a middle point wherein a mellowed world view tempers his art towards an acceptance of the generalized layers of experience. In the works that come after *Paterson*, *The Pictures from Brueghel* (composed in the late fifties), the cacophony of divergence has subsided into carefully measured balance and coherence. The purpose of the artist, as Williams indicates through his comment on Brueghel in the last poem, is simply to note the changes civilization undergoes, with no reference, no
comment. “Peter Brueghel saw it / from the two sides” (P 165). The unobtrusive presence of the artist permeates the work of art and allows him to blend seamlessly into it. Towards the end of his life and poetic career, Williams reaches out to a space where time settles down to an ever renewing, ever fresh, expanding horizon. There is the dissolution of all dualisms and the cessation of all conflicts. As a result there is a luminous expansion of the senses in a new coalescence of energies in the form of dance. Everything exists and there is a joyous acceptance of its existence in all its beauty, however sordid, broken, or ugly it may be. By the time he wrote Paterson V and Ashphodel That Greeny Flower, the mature, humane Williams is there at the top-most with a rare warmth of associative feeling for the world of art and that of life. There is a fine balance attained; in the form of dance in Paterson V and The Desert Music, in the lasting flower of love and flame of beauty in “Asphodel, That Greeny Flower.” It is pregnant with a presence that has the potential of the perennial, like:

The light

for all time shall out speed

the thunder crack

(Pictures from Brueghel 181)

The bolt of lightning fills up the moment, and the moment turns perennial defying origins and ends. This plane can be an equation for the dilemmas posed by the modernist-postmodernist aesthetic. It serves as the middle ground between order and disorder where formlessness can serve as a new poetic potential. It places the self somewhere in the middle register of rhetoric in order to secure values that can be won by turning away from questions of beginnings and endings. It is a self coextensive with
the things of the world. This embodies his, 'sudden resignation to existence' which he has described to Marianne Moore in a letter in 1947. There he spoke of "a despair which made everything a unit and at the same time a part of myself," when he was about twenty in 1903, and added that "as a reward for this anonymity I feel as much parts of things as trees and stones" (SL 147 already referred to earlier in Chapter IV).

This is a Zen like acceptance of here and now. This is a register that comes closer to Eastern modes of feeling and being. In eradicating the boundaries of self and the other, poets from Emerson tried to absorb aspects of Buddhism, and as an influence it extends even to contemporary times in the works of Gary Snyder and Peter Mathiessen. The modernists also alighted upon certain aspects of Buddhism as part of their eclectic gathering of world, myth and spiritualism. Williams like Eliot and Wallace Stevens was interested in Buddhist thoughts and teachings. In Zen there is no such thing as a profound, esoteric truth; if there is something that comes close to it, it lies in every day things seen by every one. As the Japanese poet Shinkichi wrote in the poem, "The Beginning and the End," it is the mind that matters:

One cannot say where the mind exists
It exists everywhere. The universe is filled with it
The mind is beyond being large or small
It never vanishes.
It continues to exist after the body dies. From its view point, there is no such thing as dying.
The mind was present before we were born.
It is never born.
Nothing exists outside it
All that exists in the mind
One cannot say it exists
But clearly the mind is moving,
That is the beginning of all.
The mind always lies at the beginning
And it is for ever ending.
Everything is nothing but the mind
Between the beginning and the end there is not a
hair's breadth.

This places the self at the unchanging midpoint between past and future. The Breughel of the past (world of art) or a relationship of personal sympathy and understanding that stretches through time as in Ashphodel That Greeny Flower are experiences that the unchanging self located at mid point encounters. Time that has passed and time to come crumble minute by minute but the mind or the self exists in the timelessness of the present at midpoint. At this point “all things enter into the singleness of the moment and the moment partakes of the diversity of all things” (SE 97).

With liberal humanism, Williams accommodates everything into the fold of Paterson (The Paterson flood, the Paterson fire, and the ideas on Social Credit). The history of Paterson converges into the plans and projects for its growth in future. There is not only the Paterson river and falls, but the "sink with the waste farina in it," a mine's drilling record, a fashionable grocery list or a snake with its tail in its mouth. This kind of
'presencing' in the Heideggerian sense establishes its 'being.' The early Greeks, Heraclitus, Anaximander, Parmenides first thought of Being and Time as presencing. This presencing was thought of as coming out into the openness, an unconcealment, deconcealment. William W. Spanos in Martin Heidegger and the Question of Literature: Toward a post modern Literary Hermeneutics explains how in the Heideggerian sense time as presencing is coming into the open, staying, departing yet remaining in the unconcealment. Thus if being is presencing and time is presencing, both beings that presence and beings that absence are, and persist, in their way of staying in the open, that has been deconcealed. Thus the Paterson collage or bricolage is a powerful presencing of its being on the timeless fringes of time.

Poets like Williams and Pound couldn't contain the presencing of the irreducible plurality of the phenomena into the confines of a lyric which as solipsistic unit fails to keep pace with the bewildering contingency of life. They strive hard to counter it through the long poem, which opens up infinite possibilities of the 'irreducible plurality of the text' that Roland Barthes spoke of. Although the modernist lure of coherence tempted Williams and Pound to indulge in a programme of a lengthy labour involved in understanding the things and events of the world which undergo the vicissitudes of time, the very length turned problematic. By seeking the universal in the local, Williams was striving to get above the narrow conception of self to obtain an absolute identity, knowledge and unity with the world. As early as 'The wanderer' ('my first poem, which in turn led to Paterson' [Autobiography 60-1]) William had asked the question, "How shall I be a mirror to this modernity?" (CPI 108)
The travail took him through the Paterson landscape where voices other than his resonated, without and within, engendering knowledge, "And I knew all (or enough) / it became me." (P 271). But Williams is no Zen master. To stand at a point free from the contingencies of time and space, history and culture, one has to reach that supreme stage of enlightenment, the "satori" in Zen Buddhism. "Satori" cannot be attained by a logical process of ratiocination: it perceives the essence of reality, it is the knowledge of an individual object and also of the reality which is at the back of it. This is not seeking things in a positive or negative view, but accepting them as what they are and it extends beyond the personal level. To reach that ultimate level is to go beyond the dualism of all forms of life and death, good and evil, being and non being.16 The problematic the long poem poses to Williams is a sense of incompletion, a growing sense of the 'divisions and imbalances,' and a tolerant view of the pluralism of the world. But Williams does not throw up his hands in despair although 'weakness dogs him,' the thought of 'fulfillment only a dream, or in a dream,' prods him on (P 224). Performance as a process has to go on in this postmodern plane life; the dance of survival is to "begin to begin again" (P 167).

The present may be accessed through a wise, open, passivity so that the present is experienced as a "soft now". But the now can also be experienced as a "hard now" when the experiencing self exerts its energies of will and desire to transform the passive flow of present existence into a willed, willing creative mode of experience. The Paterson canvas becomes an aggregation of particularizing, and particularized moments from which readers are at liberty to retrieve generalized layers of experience. The text here is an indeterminate source of starting points (beginnings) offering multiple
closures. By locating itself between stasis and ek-stasis, stillness and motion, potential and fulfillment, Paterson dissolves the distinction between experience and expression.

Unlike Cantos, Paterson was not the final work of the poet. The fragments of Paterson were left unfinished while Williams went on with "Ashphodel That Greeny Flower" and The Desert Music (1954). While the fag ends of Paterson lay with the weight of absolute indefinability, opening up depths where silence answer back silence, Williams was responding to a fine humanism that filtered in through a mellowed world view. These later poems exhibit a humanism which is at odds with the early Paterson period.

By focusing primarily on Paterson, I have not gone deep into these later poetic input that are also very significant. Even though I do not demonstrate it they are very valid in his last phase. My approach to Williams, however, has been to view his work in terms of how it helps to define and articulate an incipient postmodern movement in postmodern American poetry. Paterson is a very important moment in this endeavour. Further work along this direction must examine Williams’ work that in a strange way continues as much in the work of the younger generation as in his own later poems. This dissertation has tried to frame the possible points of departure for such an undertaking.

Paterson is a raw slice of the world, the world in the throes of anticipation, anxiety: teeming with activity: mixing up the beautiful and the ugly: the joyous and the tragic – "no poem but the world." The most endearing aspect of Williams’ poetics is the fine humanism that pervades his poetry to elicit a willing, joyous acceptance of this interval of existing between birth and death. In an era of strangulating multinational
grip, Williams' empowerment of the 'local' carries meaning. The 'universal' that can not
be glimpsed in Williams' 'local' and 'particular' is perhaps not worth glimpsing. His
poems give the world back to us in all its freshness and innocence.
Notes


2 Introduction to Post modernism, Twentieth Century Literary Criticism 90, ed. Jennifer Baise (Farmington Hills: Gale, 2000) 125.


6 Joseph N. Riddel, "Decentering the Image: The "Project" of "American" Poetics?" Boundary 2.8 (Fall 1979): 175.

7 William J. Harris, The Poetry and Poetics of Amiri Baraka (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985) 35. Harris elucidates how Baraka takes Williams' method of writing verse in American idiom and repeats it. In the chapter on "The Jazz Aesthetic" he describes how repeating a form and then inverting it through a process of variation is central to Jazz.


Jeffrey Walker, “Paterson,” Bardic Ethos And The American Epic Poem (London: Louisiana State UP, 1989) 189. Jeffrey Walker distinguishes four major voices in Paterson: the narrative voice (“and as his mind fades, joining the others, he / seeks to bring it back” (P101); the “ghostly” voice addressing the beautiful thing (issuing from a vague outline that the poet hero glimpses over his right shoulder P98); the book voice invading the poet hero’s mind (O’ Thalassa! Thalassa! / the lush and hiss of water (101) and the voice of the poet hero himself, reflecting on his own ambivalent condition. Walker treats them as the Williamsian bardic means of building up a dialectic of the ‘dance of differences,’ of ‘antagonistically cooperating voices’ to a world beyond itself.

Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau (American Transcendentalists) moulded their philosophies absorbing Buddhist thoughts, and Emerson’s ‘Oversoul’ resembles the oneness that Zen seeks to attain. An intellectual concern with Buddhism can be found in the work of Beat poets, particularly Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginberg. Poets and novelists of the contemporary era like Gary Synder and Peter Matheissen have furthered the modern conception of Buddhism in literary form.


15 Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text,” Image, Music, Text, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977) 159-60. For Barthes, the text is to be distinguished from any autotelic, finite piece of work, because “etymologically, the text is an tissue, a woven fabric”; it is woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages (what language is not?), antecedent or contemporary, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony.”