CHAPTER V
ONE WORLD MAN

In the analysis presented in the preceding pages an attempt was made to build up a picture of two great 'City Poets', Walt Whitman (1819) and Carl Sandburg's (1878) representation of the 'human experience' in the city.

Though, the city as a negative point of reference is well illustrated in early Romantic Poetry by William Wordsworth's, "Tintern Abbey" (1798) and "Michael" (1800), in neither of these poems is the country, city antithesis given an explicit thematic extension; the country (or nature) is the source of moral good, and the city exists only remotely as an alternative and possibly destructive mode of life.

But Whitman gave new and positive dimension to the city and city life by exploring the question of what cities do to consciousness and what consciousness may in turn do with the city. He offered a different analysis of the process of urban spectatorship and a different understanding of the opportunities created by such spectatorship for consciousness and art. Whitman's city poetry, reveals a great deal about his understanding of modern urban civilization and the type of literature that can be created in it. Whitman, who had himself been one of the most active flaneurs in the New York press, tried to adapt the flaneur's spectatorial posture for poetic use. By adding an emotional dimension and a consciousness of time to the flaneur's panoramic arrest of time, he self consciously set out to develop a new kind of urban poetry, a new kind of urban spirituality, and ultimately a new kind
of urban love suited to serve as the glue of democracy. Whitman is the one who appears to be most openly committed to the imaginative embrace of urban life. He did write indeed a maddeningly moving and generous urban poetry. Yet because, like many in his century, he could only imagine being reconciled to an "Other" if its otherness were in some way reduced, the man who is considered America's greatest nineteenth century urban poet often wrote about his glorious Manhattan: one could find Whitman's unfailing love for the city and rich urban particularity in his poetry.

Nowhere in his poetry does Whitman explore industrial discontents, the problems of urbanization, the impact of the dynamo, or the religious doubts fostered by new scientific theories. Against the background of frontier and farm, but in contrast with it, are the major thrusts of recent nineteenth century technological advancement, including the then novel "paved streets" and "iron and stone edifices" of the recognizably modern American city. This astonishing poetic conglomeration of frontier, farm, city, mine, and the factory, is bound together only by two elements, which they all share: growth, and poet's positive, imaginative grasp of the fact of growth. Thus all items of this lengthy catalog must contribute to a positive, accumulating rhapsodic total, typically culminating in the vital presence of the poet himself. Unlike his two predecessors Jago and Cowper, who much more accurately describe the effects of early industrialism, Whitman
avoids any suggestion that primitive technology may be accompanied by smoke, dirt, noise, and danger, to say nothing of social disruption and economic injustice.

The only real foundation-walls and basis of true and full civilization, is the eligibility and certainty of boundless products for feeding, clothing, sheltering everybody-perennial fountains of physical and domestic comfort, with communication, and with civil and ecclesiastical freedom, and that then the esthetic and mental business will take of itself...

Between the opposed worlds of “Orthodox Citizens” and delinquents lies the broad middle substance of human life, and many of the longer poems of in Leaves of Grass” contain sections devoted to vivid urban composites or summaries. Section 8 of “Song of Myself”, for example, presents ordinary people in phases or states of life ranging from birth to death, from peaceful sleep to murderous violence, from innocence to knowledgeable vice and cunning. Behind the prosaic, ordinary sounds and events of life lurks the unthinkable, ready to erupt in personal crisis of public disaster. Even the sounds of Whitman, hears shouts, oaths, groans, exclamations, howls, echoes-seem to issue from some sprawling prison, some partially formed inferno totally unrelated to the bright, expansive world of “A Broadway Pageant.” The varied strings of anger, pain, lust, despair, contempt, disease, hunger, and surfeit, though presented without comment from the poet, compose a fearsome web from which there is no escape.
“The nineteenth century poet Whitman has dealt with the city not so much as a place in the simple topographical sense, but as a totally new and symbolic phenomenon which raised philosophic questions about the role of the poet, the nature of society, and the problem of evil. Thus the older poetry of place response, which was never in any doubt about these matters, gave way to the uncertain personal response of poets who confront the city in terms of their own varied spiritual and imaginative resources.”

According to Whitman the real foundation-walls and basis of true and full civilization, is the eligibility and certainty of boundless products for feeding, clothing, sheltering everybody-perennial fountains of physical and domestic comfort, with communication, and with civil and ecclesiastical freedom, and that then the esthetic and mental business will take of itself...

Whitman has no quarrel with civilization as such. The teeming life of the city is as wonderful to him the big solitude of earth. He believed that in the past there were great ages of myth and fable centered in Asia and great ages of feudalism centered in Europe. The modern age, on the other hand, was an age of science and democracy, and its center was America. The individual whose true self combined equally body and soul was for him the root fact of existence. The “rapport” to use one of Whitman’s favourite words between such individuals and between each individual and Nature provides the basis of true civilization; it is a prerequisite of the good society.
To save his individuals from an atomistic solitude, Whitman wished them bonded in some force, which he called Love, or Comradeship, or Adhesiveness. But his poetry found democracy as protean and unstable as the nation of nations itself, an uneasily shifting balance between the One and the Many. Whitman calls for a free “channel” for the things of the New World, one without the mediating hand of the author. Whitman aimed to envision the American City as an endless process of becoming, formless yet formed and he found an early form of achieving this in the shape of newspaper page, changing daily, yet regular in overall layout.

“Whitman’s visionary city is the symbolic community that Whitman sets up. People impelled by the same impulses, he feels, are the friends. Their living together is discreted by strong, healthy, and clean love. Nothing else is needed. As in a chain, one link pulls the next one: everything follows necessarily when love takes the lead. Being at work or having leisure time, talking or writing, all men through these manifestations of life exhibit their love or the outflow of it.”\(^2\)

Whitman is generally admitted as having exerted considerable influence upon Sandburg. Sandburg’s poetry is sometimes referred to as a continuation of the Whitman tradition. There are wide differences between the poetry of the two men, yet there is no doubt that the Whitman’s influence upon the living poet is recognizable and that Sandburg owes a debt to Whitman.
Sandburg gives a realistic view of American life of the twentieth century. He exults in the achievements of America, as did Whitman before him; he glories in the great cities and in the ingenuity of the American people as did Whitman; he writes of the steel mills of Gray and Pittsburgh and Birmingham and of the Prairie country and American agriculture. Yet he maintains a carefully considered attitude toward society and toward government, a disciplined thought more reminiscent of Emerson than of Whitman.

Sandburg's 'Chicago' (Chicago Poems, 1916) is a poem that best exemplifies his anthropomorphic vision of the modern city. This loud-mouthed poem of playful mockery and abuse, but of genuine appreciation, obliterates the plainly physical lineaments of the city. It blots out further any faint resemblance the reader might fancy to have to anything non-human in its appearance. The key metaphors are those of the butcher, the baker, the stacker, the player, and the handler. The qualifiers are handpicked to suit the human role the poet has conferred upon his city. They have little reference as qualifiers outside the sphere of human activity: "wicked," "crooked," "brutal," "cunning," "fierce," "bareheaded," "shoveling," "wrecking," "planning," "building," and so on. The city brags, laughs, pulsates: all done true to the human nature it receives.

Urbanite singer of cities though he is, Sandburg expresses a provincial flavor. In some of the early poems of social purpose in which he set for himself the task of employing sub-standard slang, we find a forced effect. In "To a
Contemporary Bunk shooter" he felt impelled to use certain phrases and the result is an impression of the piling-up of harsh, rude words, an effect that is unnatural. Few more savage poems existed in American literature prior to World War I. Such lines bring to mind the venomous poem “Respondez!” of Whitman. In this poem (which he later rejected, and which was not printed in European editions) Whitman in violent invective and bitter irony satirized post-Civil War society.

Like Whitman, Sandburg had also a great faith in the future. It is quite interesting to compare Whitman’s ‘Poets to Come’ with Sandburg’s “Prairie,” which bring out the two poets optimism and their faith in the future.

Sandburg’s verse represents a venture into the democratizing of poetry. He wished to create poetry understandable by a wide range of readers and to include audiences beyond the reach of the traditional poetic craftsmen. This at times leads to a paradox of sensitivity and toughness; there would almost, seem to be two Sandburg’s in his poetry -the solitary, and the social- minded; the poet of the quiet corner, of green fields and the earth serene in its changes, and the poet of streets and struggles, of dust and combat, of violence wanton or justified, of plain folk living close to a hard earth” (Sandburg, Carl. The Complete Poems, Preface, p. xxiv).

Sandburg has never failed to accept his full share of social responsibility in times of local or national emergency, although he well knows that “to be of the moment and speak out of it is to sacrifice a certain goal of perfection of art”
(Rosenthal, M.L. The Modern Poets. 183). He prefers a work of courageous struggle to an achievement of technical skill.

In his poems Sandburg achieved for Chicago what Whitman achieved for his beloved Manhattan (New York) and what Victor Hugo did for the Miserable of Paris. He transferred into poetic prominence a great metropolis, interpreting for us many facets of its society, but with particular emphasis on the underprivileged, the poor, the down trodden, the underdog. From out of the great stormy maelstrom of its teeming masses, he drew for us the factory girl, the stockyard workers, the cabaret dancers, the weary tailor on his way to work, the shovel man in faded overalls spattered with clay, the teamster, the Negro dancer with the “lazy love of the banjo thrum” (Sandburg, Carl. ‘Nigger’ line-11) the sweating ditch-diggers, the railroad section hand, the stockyard workers family, the expectant mother, Mrs. Gabrielle Giovannitti, the onion picker, who comes down Peoria street with kindling wood on the top of her head, the crippled man ill with tuberculosis, Anna Imroth who lost her life in a factory fire, the green and gray streams of working girls moving in the early morning on the downtown streets; Mamie, who tired of the small town, came to Chicago hoping to find romance and “real dreams” (Sandberg, Carl, ‘Mamie’ p. 17) “that never go smash”. (Sandburg, Carl, ‘Mamie’) the hobes of cattle cars; the gipsy woman and others. These are symbols of a city overcrowded, symbols of industrial disorganization and frustrated humanity.
In contrast, in the poem "Skyscraper" we see Sandburg’s lyric evocation of a great city of steel and iron, of great masses of men and women, a city of tall buildings which "loam in the smoke and sun" of day and the "smoke and stars of night buildings that rise to carry on the city’s business, and speak in terms of human personalities and ambitions, until they assume personality and spiritual "Soul".

The essential function of Sandburg’s poetry in dealing with critical contemporary issues is moral; his aim is not didactic but thought-provoking, if his verse at times rough-hewn, it nevertheless possesses a fundamental stability. It offers richness of thought and native wisdom; and in the tradition of Emerson and Whitman it elevates ordinary humanity.

The American poets are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races. Of them a bard is to be commensurate with a people. To him the other continents arrives as contributions... he gives them reception for their sake and his own sake. His spirit responds to his countries spirit.... he incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes. Of all nations the United States with veins full of poetic stuff most need poets and will doubtless have the greatest and use them the greatest. Their Presidents shall be their common referees so much as their poets shall. Of all mankind the great poet is the equable man. Nothing out of its place is good and nothing in its place is bad. He bestows on every objects or quality its fit proportions neither more or less. He is the orbiter of the diverse and he is the key.
He is the equalizer of his age and land.... he supplies what wants supplying and checks what wants checking.

If peace is the routine out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich, thrifty, building vast populous cities, encouraging agriculture and the arts and commerce-lighting the study of man, the soul, immortality federal, State or Municipal Government, marriage, health, free trade, intertravel by land and sea.... nothing too close, nothing too far off... the stars not too far off.

Although America, before the civil War, did not yet have a metropolis comparable with those of Europe, it was, culturally speaking, very much a part of the civilization that produced flaneur. As their own cities grew and as their own metropolitan culture began to develop, Americans read the writing of European, and particularly English flaneurs. By the 1840s, United States had produced flaneurs of its own, urban journalists who expressed the cosmopolitan aspirations of a committedly commercial and rapidly urbanizing nation. Whitman was one of the major writers with his characteristic ways of looking at and representing cities. Whitman had a different analysis of the process of urban spectatorship and he had a different understanding of the opportunities created by such spectatorship for consciousness and art.

To assume that urban spectatorship is callous is not only to deny people on experience that has been one of the great pleasures of urban social life in every period in history. It is to deny them access to a form of spectatorship that, in spite of
its detachment, is capable of stimulating a socially constructive interest in the diversity of the urban population. To find such interaction intrinsically inadequate is to suggest that the only legitimate forms of human interaction are those between people who know each other. To believe this is to automatically rule out the possibility of a decent society of millions of people. In a city of millions, we can’t all be neighbours, family, and friends. It is impossible to be anything but an interested and extremely limited spectator to the lives of all but a small number of the people one encounters. In such a society we need a new, admittedly more abstract understanding of community and moral obligation, one that accepts a world of strangers and accepts the inevitability of what is frequently decried as “Urban Impersonality”. One could recognize how easily the inevitable conditions of impersonality can justify or produce moral indifference.

However, that the development of such a sense of involvement with an obligation toward a world of strangers is more likely to be fostered by the experience of seeing and watching them than it is by ways of life that involve avoiding the sight of them. Just as our commitment to cities may become stronger if we divest ourselves of images of the city formed by ancient archetypes and recent journalistic distortions, our ability to construct a modern urban concept of community will be enhanced if we can divest ourselves of assumptions about community that are only relevant to smaller, simpler societies. In order to do this, however, we need to develop a different perspective on urban spectatorship as a
social activity. Whitman’s poetic project begins to demonstrate the possibility of this, that the flaneur’s genial tolerance might become the basis, in ways that Romantic anti urban disgust never could have, of a sympathetic and generous involvement in the life of an urban community.

As Dana Brand remarks, “we should either accept the experience of spectatorship as an intrinsic part of life in the modern world or else explicitly accept the consequences of a return to a world where it is not a prominent feature. We should either develop an aesthetic and a posture of modernity that can accept and even celebrate incoherence, dissonance, discontinuity, and the freedom of impersonality or we should explicitly accept the consequences of a return to a world in which these qualities are not encountered.

A world in which we know and know about everyone we see, a world in which we have clearly defined reciprocal bonds with everyone we meet, is a village world, or a feudal world, a world few of us would sincerely want except in moments of nostalgic fancy, a world that is not only incompatible with the processes and benefits of industrial society, but which would, practically speaking, involve a return to a degree of homogeneity, fixity of values, and rigidity of social roles that most modern people would find intolerable. It is about time that we stopped sentimentalizing both the urban and rural past, neither of which was as harmonious, intimate, civil, or decent as our fantasies make them out to be.
The modernist rejection of modernity, which forms such a substantial part of what is taken for granted in our discourse about the modern world, is not just an encumbrance, leading us into paradoxical situations. It is actually dangerous, and not only because it allows us to quarantine and abandon the social problems that are most evident in our cities.

In its Spenglerian manifestations, this refusal to accept modernity was a crucial part of the anticosmopolitan ideology of fascism. Much of the twentieth century establishes the actual danger of believing that the freedom and richness of modernity are an adequate compensation for the loss of the order, coherence, and meaning that may or may not have been characteristic of the experience of earlier periods.

In the light of this, it would be wise for us to accept and begin to accommodate the world we live in: to accept the fact that people want to be individuals, with as many real and imagined options as possible, that people enjoy being spectator’s and consumers and this does not necessarily dehumanize them or deprive them of their autonomy, that people enjoy collecting and fondling a broad range of experiences, and that their need for order and meaning within experience have been overestimated.

The particular pleasures and freedom of modern existence can still be integrated with an ideal of social justice. An acceptance of a world created by capitalism does not involve a pledge to accept capitalism as it is. There seems to be
no intrinsic reason why there can’t be a perspective on modernity that preserves the flaneur’s tolerance, curiosity, and love of spectacle, while adding a deeper social, cultural, and moral awareness. There seems to be no reason why we cannot enjoy the spectatorial pleasures of the flaneur, while expanding the scope of those pleasures to include pleasure in various forms of dissonance and discontinuity that were excluded when the flaneur crowded out his more subversive, carnivalesque rivals.

There also seems to be no good reason why there cannot be perspective on modern urban life that understands the terrible things that can be seen or experienced in a city in the context of society as a whole, and not as a sign of the inevitable depravity of cities or the inevitable squalor of modern life. It is not so much that the modern world is incoherent, impersonal, and immoral compared with earlier periods as that we have failed to develop effective and accurate ways of perceiving, imagining, and representing it.

We will only develop a better way of imagining cities if we divest ourselves of our obsolete expectations and historically inaccurate nostalgia. With some flexibility, historical perspective, tolerance, and imagination we can develop urbanist literature.

In spite of Wordsworth’s complaint, it should not in the end matter that “the face of every one that passes is a mystery:” it cannot be otherwise. And it is not so bad.
Still we cannot discard the observations of many thinkers and writers regarding the city ambiguity.

"It is not too much to suggest, at this point, that Denham's view of the city, compounded of suspicion and disfavor on the one hand, and high visionary expectation on the other, anticipates two opposed artistic visualizations of the modern metropolis with which we are familiar: that of the poetic realist who summarily rejects the city as the very center and source of the disintegrative effects that are all too obvious in twentieth-century life. And the poetic myth maker who idealizes the metropolis as an epitome of human progress and who sees it as a potent symbol of man's ever-continuing physical and spiritual development."\textsuperscript{4}

This ambiguity itself perhaps defines our present cultural assumptions and feelings toward the city. The city-alive, certainly, but with no clear emerging direction fecund as well, but defying assigned value. Thus we find ourselves somewhere between the two old attitudes expressed in the eighteenth century by William Cowper's "God made the country and Man made the town" and by Samuel Johnson's "when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life." This indeterminate positioning, this ambiguity we recognize as our selves, is to some large degree still shaped in our awareness by literary power.

David Weimer remarks that "Having introduced the city to American poetry, (Whitman) displayed considerable uncertainty as to what to do with it."\textsuperscript{5} It might be more accurate to say that in "Leaves of Grass" we see parts and fragments of a
great city poem for which Whitman simply could not find a satisfactory moral and aesthetic co-ordinating principle. These parts and fragments range from the broad moral formula of "Song of the Open Road" to the silent, rapt awareness of "Sparkles" from the wheel, from the poignant glimpses of evil and suffering in "Song of Myself" to the exultant vision of "Manhatta". Invoked separately, neither the formula nor the sensitivity nor the myth could quite make the great city yield its complex, elusive truth.

Though it is very difficult to conclude anything from the varied approaches and the statements about the intertwining of city life and literature, it is clear that the city still influences our perceptions of the city. These mutual influences may easily be argued for in other eras and cultures, but these views are rooted in the modern, industrial, western experience. In many of them there is an underlying lament for the passing away of an old idea or old reality of the city as golden, as polis, as civilization's highest reach. Yet even by expatriates of the metropolis, urban life is still perceived as vital-the place of a moral dynamism" instanced by Joyce Carol Oates, for example. The old positive view of the city as spiritual, material, or intellectual deliverance no longer commands-unqualified belief, nor does the equally old attitude of the city as corruption, the City as Sodom of the Plains.

What strikes the reader of this city poetry is the poets' significantly modern attitude. For all their diversity of style, approach, and subject, they share an
ambiguous attitude toward the city, an uncertainty about positive and negative, an "unresolvable ambivalence," as Leslie Fiedler puts it. The writers condemnation of modern cities, however patent, thorough, and open-eyed, is often accompanied by cautious hope, as in Ihab Hassan's speculation that, dying "the city may simply cede the initiative to another organization of human energies," or Lawrence Ferlinghetti's recognition of good human desire, the "still insurgent voice," or James Baldwin's alternative to destruction-"the miracle of our brotherhood".

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Some times textualizing the city creates its own reality, becomes a way of seeing the city-but such textuality cannot substitute for the pavement and buildings, for the physical city. Before the city is a construct, it is physical reality with a dynamics of its own, even as the dynamics becomes difficult to assess. The most convincing constructs are those that confirm our sense of reality, validate experience, and suggest, coherence in the face of chaos.

As the outer shell of the city grew, so to say; its interior likewise expanded not merely its inner spaces, within the sacred precinct but its innerlife. Dreams welled up out of that interior and took form; fantasies turned into drama. And desire flowered into poetry and dance and music. The city itself thus became a collective expression of love, detached from the urgencies of sexual reproduction.
Activities that sprang to life only on festal occasions in ruder communities became part of the daily existence of the city. And as Lewis Mumford says what began as a wholesale transformation of the environment became a transformation of man.

By means of the order so established, large bodies of men were for the first time brought into effective co-operation. Organized in disciplined work groups, deployed by central command, the original urban populations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus valley controlled flood, repaired storm damage, stored water, remodeled, the landscape, built up a great water network for communication and transportation, and filled the urban reservoirs with human energy available for other collective enterprises. In time, the rulers of the city created an internal fabric of order and justice that gave to the mixed populations of cities, by conscious effort, some of the moral stability and mutual aid of the village, Within the theater of the city new dramas of life were enacted.

But against this improvement we must set the darker contributions of urban civilization; war; slavery, vocational over specialization, and in many places, a persistent orientation toward death. These institutions and activities, forming a “negative symbiosis,” have accompanied the city through most of its history, and remain today in markedly brutal form, without their original religious sanctions, as the greatest threat to further human development. Both the positive and negative aspects of the ancient city have been handed on, in some degree, to every later urban structure.
Through its concentration of physical and cultural power, the city heightened the tempo of human intercourse and translated its products into forms that could be stored and reproduced. Through its monuments, written records, and orderly habits of association, the city enlarged the scope of all human activates, extending them backwards and forwards in time. By means of its storage facilities (Buildings, vaults, archives, monuments, tablets, books), the city became capable of transmitting a complex culture from generation to generation, for it marshaled together not only the physical means but the human agents needed to pass on and enlarge this heritage. That remains the greatest of the city’s gifts. As compared with the complex human order of the city, our present igneous electronic mechanism for storing and transmitting information are crudely limited.

The chief function of the city is to convert power into form energy into culture, dead matter into the living symbols of art, biological reproduction into social creativity. The positive functions of the city cannot be performed without creating new institutional arrangements capable of coping with the best energies modern man now commands: arrangements just as bold as those that original transformed the overgrown village and its stronghold into the nucleated, highly organized city. And without the city modern man would have no effective defenses against those mechanical collectives that, even now, are ready to make all veritably human life superfluous, except to perform a few subservient functions that the machine has not yet mastered.
We must now conceive the city, accordingly, not primarily as a place of business or government, but as an essential organ for expressing and actualizing the new human, personality—that of “One World Man”. The separation of man and nature, of townsman and countryman, of Greek and barbarian, of citizen and foreigner, can no longer be maintained: for communication, the entire planet is becoming a village; and as a result, the smallest neighborhood or precinct must be planned as a working model of the larger world. Now it is not the will of a single defied ruler, but the individual and corporate will of its citizens, aiming at self-knowledge, self-government, and self-actualization, that must be embodied in the city. Not industry but education will be the center of their activities; and every process and function will be evaluated and approved just to the extent that it furthers human development, whilst the city itself provides a vivid theater for the spontaneous encounters and challenges and embraces of daily life.

As we have been seen the city has undergone many changes during the last five thousand years; and further changes are doubtless in store. But the innovations that beckon urgently are not in the extension and perfection of physical equipment; still less in multiplying automatic electronic devices for dispersing into formless suburban dust the remaining organs of culture. Just the country: significant improvements will come only through applying art and thought to the city’s central human concerns, with a fresh dedication to the cosmic and ecological processes that enfold all being. We must restore to the city the material, nurturing functions, the
autonomous activities, the symbolic associations that have long been neglected or suppressed. For the city should be an organ of love, and the best economy of cities is the care and culture of men.

The final mission of the city is to further man’s conscious participation in the cosmic and the historic process. Through its own complex and enduring structure, the city vastly augments man’s ability to interpret these processes and take an active, formative part in them, so that every phase of the drama it stages shall have, to the highest degree possible, the illumination of consciousness, the stamp of purpose, the color of love. That magnification of all the dimensions of life, through emotional communion, rational communication, technological mastery, and above all, dramatic representation has been the supreme office of the city in history. And it remains the chief reason for the city’s continued existence.

Modern man, unfortunately, has still to conquer the dangerous aberrations that took institutional form in the cities of the Bronze Age and gave a destructive destination to our highest achievements. Like the rulers of the Bronze Age, we still regard power as the chief manifestation of divinity, or if not that, the main agent of human development. But ‘absolute power’, like ‘absolute weapons’, belongs to the same magico-religious scheme as ritual human sacrifice. Such power destroys the symbiotic co-operation of man with all other aspects of nature, and of men with men. Living organisms can use only limited amounts of energy. ‘Too much’ or ‘too little’ is equally fatal to organic existence. Organisms, societies, human persons, not
least, cities are delicate devices for regulating energy and putting it to the service of life. (Lewis Mumford 571).

Thought, it is a poet of our own who has said: “God made the country; Man made the town”, in this saying there is a portion of truth but it does not contain the whole truth. As commonly understood, its effect is to substitute, error in the place of truth.

Even the country, in the greater part, is no longer seen as it would appear if wholly devoid of the agency of man. In the absence of what man has done upon it, the surface of the earth must have remained barren, or have degenerated into a monstrous wilderness. No visible hand beside could have prevented it from becoming the home of every rank production, and of every unclean thing.

Nor should it be forgotten, that it was as much a part of the purpose of the Creator with regard to man that he should build towns, as that he should till the land. If the history of cities, and of their influence on their respective territories, be deducted from the history of humanity, the narrative remaining would be, as we suspect, of no very attractive description. “In such case, the kind of picture which human society must everywhere have presented, would be such as we see in the condition, from the earliest time, of the wandering hordes of Mongolians and Tartans, spread over the vast flats of central Asia. In those regions, scarcely anything has been “Made” by man.” “But this most happy circumstance, as it seems to be accounted this total absence of any-thing reminding you of human skill and
industry, has never been found to realize our poetic ideas of pastoral beauty and innocence. It has called forth enough of the squalid and of the ferocious, but little of the refined, the powerful, or the generous.

Thus the manifest tendency of the half-truth contained in the saying adverted to, is not to convey a true impression so much as a false one, and how large a portion of the error in the world may be traced, in this manner, to partial announcements of truth; if this saying has any meaning, it must mean, that man in the city, is in a less favorable condition for the development of his nature, than man in the field; that in prosecuting the higher arts, which flourish in cities, he is not so much in his place as in attending to the more limited arts which relate to pasturage and cattle. But where is the man of sense that would not as soon think of reasoning to the first quadruped he should meet upon the village road, as to the that could really mean to insinuate such a notion?

If any thing be certain, it would seen to be certain, that man is constituted to realize his destiny from his association with man, more than from any contact with places. The great agency in calling forth his capabilities, whether for good or for evil, is that of his fellows. The picturesque, according, may be with the country, but the intellectual, speaking generally, must be with the town. Agriculture may not be devoid of intelligence; but in such connexions, the science and intelligence, in common with the nourishment of the soil, must be derived, in the main, from the studies prosecuted in cities, and from the wealth realized in the
traffic of cities. If pastor age is followed by tillage, and if tillage is made to partake of the nature of a study and a science, these signs of improvement are peculiar to lands in which cities make their appearance, and they become progressive only as cities become opulent and powerful. In this sense we might venture to change the language of our poet a little, and say, "Man makes the country, where art makes the town": and is so saying we should make a much near approach toward the truth.

**Recent Urban Trends in America:**

Unlike the countries of Europe, not to mention Japan and China, the United States boasts enormous cities today, at the end of the so-called "American Century" that barely existed one hundred fifty years ago. Los Angeles is a good example: a mission settlement belonging to Spain in 1830, by 1945 it had become a five thousand-square-mile sprawl. In 1830, Detroit was a trading post on a dirt crossroads. Houston a muddy frontier town called Harrisburg. San Francisco a small hilltop settlement that went by the name Yerba Buena. Chicago had yet to be incorporated as a village. Denver and Seattle, of course, didn’t even exist. In historical terms, the urban culture has developed at hothouse speed, with all at attendant hothouse permutations and outgrowths-spectacular, freakish, stunted, and delirious. Quicksilver migrations, immigrations, and displacements. Boom times and fierce depressions, in which whole industries, ethnic groups, and cultural phenomena have thrived and vanished in the wink of an eye.
All this in one hundred fifty years-hardly a blip on the screen of world history. With the Industrial Revolution, most of the America's big cities expanded exponentially after the Civil War. And from Whitman and Poe, the first truly urban poets (who took different forks off the same road), and then Stephen Crane to Hart Crane, there is a long and important line of poets that first becomes apparent with the consolidation of these cities as mass centers and continues to thrive in the present day megalopolis. If American rural poetry reflects the flux of nature, and of man-in nature as both observer and participant, American urban poetry must mirror a far more complex sort of flux: not just of populations in a man-made environment, but of the myriad human activities and crosscurrents-economic, political, religious, sexual, intellectual, artistic-that define that environment. The tableau of urban poetry is, quite simply, all of human society and every occurrence therein-from the erection of skyscrapers and suspension bridges, to the game a child might invent on a sidewalk, to the words murmured between two mourners at a funeral. A literally infinite range of subject matter.

American cities are physical labyrinths, and also spiritual and metaphysical ones. The business of the city poet is to chronicle, explore, excavate, and reflect the byways, recesses, and inner chambers of that labyrinth. Sometimes the reflections he or she comes upon in the depths of the maze will be from a dark mirror, or a mirror of dizzying clarity, or even a funhouse mirror of strange distortions.
Innumerable themes that the city (whatever American city it might be) would filter and radiate through its poets, and their poems, to their audience. How the basic themes of love, sex, renewal, memory and death are dealt with from an urban perspective, in urban settings. A riveting city poem can be about a love affair, a dream, a meal, a midnight walk, a snowstorm, a crime; its perspective will be dictated by the imagination of the poet.

Emerson put it simply: "The poet has a new thought; he has a whole new experience to unfold; he will tell us how it was with him, and all men will be the richer in his fortune." In other words, in poetic terms, we might turn around the national motto and proclaim, "From the one, Many." Worlds unto themselves, the cities were fed during and after Reconstruction with crucially important migrants from the rural South-African-Americans, former slaves and the offspring of slaves-who, despite disenfranchisement on a grand scale, persecution legal and otherwise, and an obscene denial of basic human rights, intensified, enriched, and transformed the urban culture inestimably. At the same time in the American history, there was a vast influx of immigrants, coming from every other country on the planet and flooding the American cities. People with different languages, customs, beliefs-and prejudices. The much more complex, fertile and volatile has made the American cities-in comparison to foreign cities like Tokyo whose national governments practically prohibit immigration of any kind, much less racial variety-cannot really be calculated. Census takers in 1990 reported that a
single four-square-block area in Queens, New York, boasted no less than one hundred eighteen different nationalities of registered aliens and foreign-born citizens!

The German historian Oswald Spengler, writing on the eve of the First World War, when legal immigration to the United States was at its peak, stated that the emergence of New York as a "World-City" was the single most important development in the nineteenth century. It marked not only the ascendancy of the United States as the preeminent international power, but was also the historical moment in which American cities became the magnet for mass immigration. These immigrants and their successors, from Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, literally built the American cities that are today, and the railroads and high-ways that connect them, as well as the wildly variegated (ever-expanding) cultural perimeters that give them their soul. A handful of those immigrants, and a somewhat larger handful of their offspring, have made the latter category of construction work-in the arts-their life's work. Poets speak for themselves, not for groups of people, but it is hoped that Americans of every stripe will find some familiar and comforting, or discordant and equally familiar, echo of their own voices in the works of the city poets.

As we approach the end not just of the century but of the millennium, 1975, too, seems far off in time. In urban terms, it certainly is. One need only consider that two words with instant recognition in any American city today—"AIDS" and
"crack" were literally unknown anywhere two decades ago. In 1968, seventy-one percent of the people in the United States lived in cities, on one percent of the land. Today, over eighty-five percent of the population are city dwellers. And the last twenty years have marked an especially important period in the history of urban American poetry. If city life has gotten more intense on a day-to-day level, its poetry has certainly followed suit. 1965 marked the beginning of a cultural revolution in this country especially in Rock-Music, Drugs, from marijuana to psychedelics, Sexual-Mores, also in patterns of marriage and divorce. While the U.S. government waged a bloody, unpopular, and futile war—the first war on foreign soil they would ever lose—citizens in legion numbers took to the streets at home to protest with fervor. They also joined marches for civil rights and women's rights, and rallied for numerous other social changes. The society was in ferment, and the arts were not only a part of that ferment, but also brought much of it about. And much of it, of course, was centered in the cities.

But if 1965 was the watershed year, 1975 marked both the end of that era and the beginning of a new one. Some would argue that it was a passive era, culminating in the reactionary and piously puritanical ethos. A period of retreat, of people taking stock—of taking flight. But for American poetry, 1975 marked the beginning of a renaissance that continues and flourishes to this day. Good poetry is not journalism—a set of narrowly topical, easy-to-digest “bulletins from the front.” One can write a pamphlet in the heat of battle; it's tougher to write a good poem
under such conditions, much less one that will endure beyond its own era and grow in power and relevance. Poets need to digest events big and small, inside and outside their own lives, and to be able to transform and distill them imaginatively with objectivity and detachment— with the “cold eye” that Yeats insisted was necessary for true poetic production. American poetry seemed to explode onto the page after 1975—not just because of its content and style, but because of the new generation of American poets who came of age with full heads and full hearts in the succeeding years. There was a hiatus of ten years between the social and cultural cataclysm that occurred in 1965 and the revolution in poetry that followed.

Walt Whitman in ‘Democratic Vistas’ has given a loving testament of how the city provided him with as much, if not more, poetic fodder as “Nature.... great in her fields of freedom and the open air.” He compares the city’s bright and dark sides. “the splendor, picturesqueness, and oceanic amplitude and rush of these great cities.... the costly and lofty new buildings, facades of marble and iron... the heavy, low, musical roar, hardly ever intermitted, even at night”. And this is also the city, he went on, that is, “crowded with petty grotesques, malformations, phantoms,” in which, everywhere, “in shop, street, church, theatre, bar-room, official chair, are pervading flippancy and vulgarity, low cunning, infidelity.....”

Of course today, as over a century ago, all American cities are both of these cities—and then some. The best of our urban poets deal with the bright and the dark,
and the many more difficult, intricate, and ambiguous shades of nuance and purpose in between. Whitman, ever torn, insisted he took heart from the redemptive possibilities and sheer vitality of the city’s “ingenuities, streets, goods, houses.... these electric crowds of men.”

‘New Urbanism’ as a product and ideology tries to address the stresses by selling environments which claim to be able to increase the local share of the networking, reducing the conflicts between the wish for local trust and the realities of social networks of trust thinly spread and held together through technologic means and infrequent personal contact. It is ironic that the iconic example of New Urbanism, Seaside, is a resort and so, by definition, is a place of chance encounters (Mohney and Easterling, 1955). This reviewer cannot judge the architectural quality of the pattern books, such as, for example, those reproduced nearly illegibly in Duany and Plater-Zyberk (1991), but it is obvious that with respect to the spatial structure they are not able to overcome the standard inward-looking patterns of suburbia. They are not gated, but nearly so—see, for example, the plans in Calthorpe, 1993, or Duany and Plater-Zyberk, 1991. Seaside is different, but the nearest substantial city is many miles away. To a cynic the increased architectural quality and the higher ground floor- lot-area ratios associated with New Urbanism are the expected reactions of the housing market to higher lot prices, as in the prominent New Urbanism market California. Similar trends can be observed in many European suburban areas.
The oppressiveness of the place-based networks, the increased participation in higher education, the greater fluidity of many labour markets, the car and the subsidised hosing ownership motivated and enabled the search for less place-dependent social networks and living arrangements. Social distances could be increased and networks of exchange loosened, with little or no risk, as long as professional services are either provided by the state or are affordable privately. The parallel post-World War II growth of the welfare state and of real incomes for most allowed both. This replacement of social co-ordination and exchange with capital continues with every additional mobile phone, TV set, Walkman, room or car bought by a household. It is no surprise that the remaining constraints, nearly exclusively those of time, are perceived as so stressful.

Sexton's (1995) book comparing the quasi-urban Seaside in the non-urban Florida Panhandle with the pseudo-rural Sea Ranch in the exurban Sonoma County north of San Francisco makes the point that this quest for order, stability and connections can be satisfied in more than one way. While Seaside and similar ‘New Urbanism’ developments cannot ensure that social networks will again overlap to an extent which is meaningful in social terms, Sea Ranch does not even try. This Broadacre City-like settlement tries to minimise its environmental and aesthetic impact by hiding in the landscape.

Residents of various gated communities reported by Blakely and Snyder (1997), which indicate a high level of anonymity in the more ‘up-market’ areas.
Some types of gated communities seem to work socially for their residents, as the continuing success of places such as Sun City, the original gated retirement community, shows (Findley, 1992, The Early Development of Sun City). Here, the developers ‘morph’ resort owners and organize or support the various social activities by for example, providing land for churches and social facilities.

The literature on the effects of telecommunications on urban form and urban society is too vast to be reviewed properly here (for examples, Cairn Cross, 1995, 1999; Castells, 1996; or the mid-decade review of Graham and Marvin, 1996.). Still, it is clear that the speed of technological innovation, the on-going price reductions for telecommunications hardware and services and the decreasing gap between the quality at bottom and the top of the range have left analysts confused about the implications of internet-mediated services (e-commerce, e-information provision and e-knowledge generation and distribution) for urban society. It is clear that telecommunications and physical movements are complementary so far: volumes of both are growing in parallel. The statistics available on the transport side are currently unable to trace any substitution effects at the level of movement purpose (leisure trips enabled by home-delivery service, visits to friends made possible by the free time available from filling an electronic form formerly requiring presence at an office), as they are only starting to capture electronic interactions delivered to or in the home for example an on-going Swedish national
joint survey of telecommunications use and transport, or smaller academic efforts elsewhere.

The increased quality of access through higher speed/bandwidths at lower costs has removed the local constraints which in the past enforced the overly of the social networks. It seems unlikely that the new or regained urban forms can motivate a voluntary renunciation of the social and spatial reach gained by the car or the Internet. The increased worldwide social division of labour enabled by these networks is matched by tighter-fitting social networks at a personal level, which are maintained over long physical distances. The suggested urban and regional forms require increased co-ordination efforts in their construction, their maintenance and their operation/living in comparison with the package consisting of a single-family house in suburbia and the car/TV/phone for every licenced household member. The social and environmental externalities of the suburban nexus will probably have to spiral out of before a new urban form paradigm can be established, including the reconstruction or abandonment of the existing suburban development. At this time, it is unclear if they will. Even if they do, it is unclear that enough people will perceive this loss of control and in turn might be willing to act jointly, instead of retreating into gated environments of all types: SUVs, electronically secured houses, gated developments, office parks and club resorts. ‘Only Downs’ (1994) touches upon it by showing that even a complete shift to
New Urbanism as the paradigm of new construction has no substantial impact for a very long time due to the enormous amount of the already-built environment.

From a transport perspective, the overlapping issues are the social externalities of unpriced access to the road infrastructure, the inefficient pricing and regulation of traffic-generated pollution and noise, the principles of investment planning and the total costs of a given network structure. The urban vision of the first half of the 20th century isolated traffic as separate function which, in the hands of the emerging transport planning and traffic engineering professions, developed its own logic. This, in turn, has often overpowered the urban logic. These urban visions all celebrated the car as clean, fast, liberating and all-round wonderful—the death knell of the hated 19th-century city. They reflected the consensus at a time in both Europe and the US when the car was not generally available, certainly not in Europe (for a good history of the adoption of the Car, McShane, 1994).

Urbanization, industrialization, and immigration had altered national demographics of the 1920s. Hard conditions in cities was often blamed on new immigrants, and in 1924 Congress enacted the Exclusive Act, barring immigration from certain parts of the world, notably Asia, as a way to control the racial, a ethnic composition of the United States. Following the crash of the stock market in 1929, a depression in, causing unrest and economic upheaval on a global scale. Europe saw the rise of fascist dictatorship in the United States, politics and economics became central concerns overriding questions of individual freedom.
Under Franklin Roosevelt's Presidency, liberal reforms aimed to cushion the population from effects of the depression and helped alleviate a potential civil war. In addition, the apparent failure of capitalism and individualism, led to growing sympathies with communism, especially because it opposes fascism. But in this period, previously silent and disenfranchised groups, notably women and African the Americans, began to write. Rampant industrialization led many workers and those sympathetic with plight of the laboring classes to turn to the Marxist writings of Karl Marx. Marx’s ideas, which formed the basis of communist philosophy, advanced the notion that liberty and justice should exist for all, and just for those who controlled the means of production. Such ideas became popular with writers and intellectuals but were often deemed “un-American”.

The 1920s was a period marked by rampant social and economic change. “Prohibition” – forbidding manufacture, sale, or exchange of alcohol-gave rise to organized crime and the “Gangster” phenomenon of the 1920s. In addition, the importance of the work of Austrian psychiatrist, Sigmund Freud, meant that Americans were reflecting more on the nature of desire, the psyches, fears. With the 19th amendment, women became more politically enfranchised. Their roles in the private and public sphere changed, as women began to advocate equality with men. Nonetheless certain writers including Ezra Pound and Ernest Hemingway maintained that authorship was a strictly masculine vocation.
Following the Great Migration out of the South, and in direct response to the industrial needs of World War I, African Americans began to take advantage of "opportunities" in the North. Despite facing race and segregation in the North, African Americans became an important part of the cultural fabric of the nation. W.E.B. Du Bois argued that African Americans had a "double consciousness"—they were aware of being American and being black. Women writers such as Nella Larsen also insisted that an awareness of gender made African American women's experiences different.

In the world of business and technology, rapid advances were made: the most notable innovation was Henry Ford's development of assembly-line automobile manufacturing that made cars affordable and accessible to a wider segment of the population. The institution of "big" science and more complex, "rational" ways of thinking about space, time, matter, and the universe also began to take places during this era, eventually creating rifts between literary intellectuals and scientists. Art to some writers, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Wallace, and William Carlos Williams, offered an alternative way of understanding the world, eventually giving rise to the idea of "two cultures"—science vs. letters.

The era following World War I marked by tremendous social upheaval and economic and political devastation, gave rise to modernism. Modernism began in Europe as a response to the devastating effects of World War I. Broadly, it refers to literary work produced in the interwar period; more specially it references the
breakdown of traditional society under the forces of modality. At a formal level, which was constructed out of fragments and are notable for what they omit. Works begin arbitrarily, unity disrupted, and shifting perspectives, voices, and tones are common. Symbols and images, rather than statements, predominate with effect of surprising, shocking, and challenging readers. Despite the level of formal disunity, modernist works desire unity. In this way, it differs from postmodernism, which does not strive to produce any form of coherence unity.

Because modernism was an international movement, it was seen by some to conflict with American literary traditions. But traditional Americanists, such as Hart Crane, William Carlos Williams, or William Faulkner, also used “modernist” techniques, shaping the tradition to account for the distinctiveness nation. “High” modernists, who were permanent expatriates living in Europe such as Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, H.D., and T.S. Eliot, left the United States because of its perceived hostility to high culture. However, they all maintained U.S. citizenship and viewed themselves as “ambassadors” of American culture in Europe during the 1920s. Other writers rooted their works in specific regions of the United States: Willa Cather in the Midwest, John Steinbeck and Carlos Bulosan in California and Robert Frost from New England. The South in particular gave rise to a multiplicity of voices including those of Katherine Anne Porter, Jean Toomer, and William Faulkner. John Dos Passos, Hart Crane, F. Scott Fitzgerald Cummings, and William Carlos Williams attempted to speak for the nation as a whole
As historian Mary Ryan's *women in Public* illustrates, urbanization transformed the lives of white middle-class women and generated anxiety and uncertainty for the culture as a whole. "Heretofore," she writes, "women's social status had largely been circumscribed by the space and relations of the household .... Now the city streets offered them new attractions, new freedoms and a veil of anonymity under which to pursue them". [5] Indeed "almost from the beginning", Elizabeth Wilson observes, "the presence of women in cities and particularly in city streets, has been questioned, and the controlling and surveillance aspects of city life have always been directed particularly at women. Urban life potentially challenged patriarchal systems. Civilization which meant luxury and consumerism, (although only for a minority) threatened the virtuous authority of the family. "[6] As Ryan examines the writings of urban officials and architects as well as the journalists who made literary careers out of "penetrating the mysteries of the city:" She demonstrates the extent to which the "controlling and surveillance aspects" of city life were directed at women in nineteenth-century America. [12]

The Greek city was in size and population no more than a good-sized village, enclosed by a city wall. It was culturally and socially homogeneous, depending upon slaves for many of its economic functions, denying citizenship to women, whose activities were limited to the domestic sphere and tending to link the political and sexual spheres through homosexuality. By contrast, the great city of the industrializing cultures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was an
expanding space, with great social, cultural, and human diversity, rapidly replacing
the labor of slaves with machines (and resources appropriated from colonies
abroad), freeing women from domesticity and allowing them the possibility of
discovering their rights, as social political, cultural, and sexual agents. This is the
world not of Paricide but of Dickens, the historical dynamic not of Thucydides but
of Carlyle. Rather than depending upon the intimate qualities of the polis, the
possibilities of Bellow’s Chicago, celebrated in novels that have an epic sweep and
intensity, derive from the juncture of five modern developments. Gunther Barth
elaborates how the modern city provided a transportation system for its population,
apartments for them to live in, department stores for them to shop, in. sports like
baseball that taught the rules of competition as well as providing of focal point for
urban loyalties, and a communications network-especially newspapers-to line
people and place.

This contrast between Greek polis and the contemporary American comes to
a focus halfway through Bellow’s 1981 novel, ‘The Dean’s December’, in a
startling passage in which, musing upon Aristotle’s comment that “a man without
a city is either a beast or a god”, Dean Corde, its protagonist, reminds a friends of
the past greatness of his native city. “Well, Chicago was the City.” The Dean does
not have the optimism of Augie and Herzog. As soon as he has made it, he begins
to doubt his assertion. “Or was it? Where was it, what had become of it? No cities?
Then where was civilization?” (229.)
To the response of a colleague—"You're very hard on the old toddling town. Are things so different elsewhere?"—Corde admits the meanings of the situation he has been struggling against: "I suppose not. Among other discoveries, I found that Chicago wasn't Chicago anymore. Hundreds of thousands of people lived there who had no conception of a place. People used to be able to say...." And his friend agrees, "Ah, yes... I'm with you there. It's no longer a location, it's only a condition. South Bronx, Cleveland, Detroit, Saint Louis, from Newyork to Watts—all these same noplace" (237). The litany can be expanded to include other cities, as Bellow's novel makes clear, encompassing not only Chicago but Bucharest's shabby spirit, as well as the cities in between. The sentiment is echoed by Clara Velde, the protagonist of Bellow's novel A Theft: "The men I meet don't seem to be real persons. Nobody really is anybody. There may be more somebodies than I've been able to see." In the modern world, "Nobody is anybody" (74,108).

'The meaning is, also, the same: "nowadays, the era of individualism, and the varied urban life on which it depended, is over".13

Whatever the reasons, this new, over determined city in its very strangeness reasserts those optimistic, world-making possibilities. Then surely have we not returned to the city Carl Sandburg celebrates?

"And having answered so I turn once more to those who sneer at this my city,

And I give them back the sneer and say to them:
Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud to be alive
And coarse and strong and cunning”.

(“Chicago”3)

**Future of the American Cities:**

America’s historic energy self-sufficiency and long-term decline in out-lay for energy raw materials reversed dramatically after 1970. Political events in the Middle East in the early 1970s focused the timing, but well-known, long-term changes in the geography of global oil reserves had set the stage (Schurr et. al. 1960; Cook 1971; Darmstadter 1972). Increased efficiency in processing and distribution has so far sheltered consumers from the higher cost of energy raw materials, but the trend during the 1970s and 1980s suggests that the energy raw material price curve reversed even more sharply than projections indicted at the time of the 1970s oil crisis. The shift to massive global imports and the adoption of very large vessels and port facilities have been accompanied by well-known environmental costs, by increases in development and transportation costs, by indirect costs of enlarged sensitivity and fear in the American people’s image of their military and diplomatic position in the Middle East, and by costs of uncertainty, false starts, and failures in the development of alternative energy sources.

The country appears to be well into a period of relatively high-cost transition in energy technology. The transition is likely to last at least into the second or third
decade of the next century. It will surely but fitfully stimulate the replacement of fossil fuel technology and eventually lead to yet another new epoch. Meanwhile, the uncertainty of future energy resources resulted almost immediately in greater efficiency of automotive fuel use, and it probably will be reflected in a multiplicity of experiments in energy-related urban developments styles.

A sharp increase in the importance of the country's overseas commerce has followed a long transition to self-sufficiency both in commodities and in industrial products during the period of complacent isolation in the auto-cheap oil epoch. World War II briefly interrupted the complacency but not the self-sufficiency, although it surely hastened the end of the epoch. Energy imports account for only about half of the growth of overseas trade in the new epoch. The rest reflects the general increase in international interaction of all kinds in the satellite-electronic-jet propulsion age.

A major information explosion has coincided with developments in satellite and electronic technologies. The rapid emergence of global, two-way conversation, video, and color image transmission has brought an unprecedented acceleration of global interaction. For example, at the growth of American overseas cable, radio, and phone messages since 1970, and the growth of interaction between cities on the domestic scene, or the consumption of paper for record keeping, correspondence, magazines, and advertising circulars that has accompanied televisions, computing, word processing, and desktop publishing.
The information explosion has produced a massive information overload at all levels—individuals and organizations; advanced societies and those less developed; and institutions responsible for managing the resource and settlement system, from the simplest tribes to the most sophisticated national governments and business corporations. All institutions, cultures, and conceptual frameworks have been opened to question. Institutions and individuals can use only a fraction of the information that buries them. They have rather suddenly become visibly functionally inadequate to a much greater degree than before.

The replacement rate since 1950 has been unprecedented. By the 1970s Americans were in a position to abandon the equivalent of all housing built before 1880. By 1990 they could be abandoning much housing built before 1900, and by the turn of the next century they could be abandoning most housing built before the rise of the automobile epoch in the 1920s, if recent rates of replacement continue. In 1920, at the end of the steel rail epoch, the frontier had finally closed, and the national pattern of cities and towns they take for granted today was completed. Two decades into the new satellite electronic-jet propulsion epoch, the nation is well along toward abandoning virtually all of the structures that existed in 1920. No replacement of similar magnitude has happened before in the American history.

The net result of these changes in the new epoch is increasing heterogeneity of physical structures in every ring. The growing heterogeneity will result in the
first place from the continuing process of aging, expansion, filtering, replacement, abandonment, and redevelopment, but additional factors are at work. The overlay of cultural communities and neighborhood centers on the map of the physical city also will grow more intricate. Social networks and nodes have been based on work, health, sports, arts, hobbies, ideas, skills, mating, beliefs, power, and control. In every one of these topical areas, at every scale, organizational variety is multiplied and splintering, accelerated by the information explosion and the resulting outpouring and fragmentation of organizational activity.

While the social, cultural, and economic geography becomes increasingly variegated and fragmented, the need for physical infrastructure continues to grow. The systems include not only transportation, utilities, and open space, but also waste disposal and recycling. Lavational issues will become more complex as the metropolis becomes increasingly the source of its own industrial raw materials, as pressure mounts to locate waste processing near the metropolitan source and market. These physical systems must be planned and organized over large areas. The question may well arise whether officials of general units of government, responsible to increasingly fragmented constituencies, can effectively plan and operate sophisticated integrated regional and national systems.

As Daniel Patrick Moynihan observes in his book, 'Urban America' that-while Americans have been willing to become urbanized, they have adamantly resisted becoming citified. Yet a measure of this process is needed. It was the great
ideal of the Greek civilization that they should create such city and preserve it, and every nation, may follow the steps of that city, ever so cautiously from the worship of the nation state with its barbarous modernity and impotent claims for a different life asserted in the oath of the Athenian city-state:

We will ever strive for the ideals and
Sacred things of the city, both alone and
With many;
We will unceasingly seek to quicken the sense
Of public duty;
We will rever and obey the city’s laws;
We will transmit this city not only
Not less, but greater, better and more
Beautiful than it was transmitted to us.

The Modernist Tradition in American Poetry:

Modernist poetry was not confined to a few great though eccentric writers at the beginning of this century, rather it has been an enduring tradition embracing writers from the east coast, mid west and Pacific coasts: imagist, objectivist, beat. International in flavour and structure but determined first and foremost by its affinity with the language and conditions of mass American democracy and the constant imperative to renew and reawaken, this poetry finds its voice in its complexity and epic quality.
The founding figures of American modernist poetry are Whitman and Poe, but they do not stand in equal relationship to one another. Through Poe, we enter the reticent, traditionalist, religionistic and conservative world of T.S. Eliot (via French poetry), John Crowe Ransom and the Southern Agrarians; through Whitman we enter the Western, democratic, irreverent and individualist world of among others. Ezra Pound (despite many of his views), William Wordsworthian chords of those whose work explores the dilemmas of the personality via a detailed description of the natural world, poets such as Marianne Moore.

Throughout these strains the search for authenticity in voice and form is the central quest. In the contest of American poetry and despite differing poets adherence to similar original models, the message from these models is one decidedly against the grain. Whitman’s message was one that taught the democratic poet that authenticity could only come from differentiation—a fresh start with a fresh language: Ezra Pound’s “Make it New”, or, as William Carlos Williams put it, “a re-examination of the means-on a fresh basis”. Yet this language had to be both individual and universal poetic and vernacular; a withdrawal into the self as an expansion of the self into the conceptual space of ‘America’.

For the American modernist poet, poetry is an act within and conditional upon mass popular culture. This poetry recognizes its connection to the life of mass culture at the level of organization and linguistic structure. Such poetry is always
engaged at the structural level, a level which is both aesthetic and deeply
politicized as critique.

The modernist tradition in American poetry traces its origins back to
Walt Whitman. Whitman’s poetry, like the modernists poetry of this century,
is epic, inclusive and concerned with “making it new”; each time seeing the
world in radical and revolutionary terms equal to the universalizing vision of
America and its concept of democracy. For the modernist poets of this century
Whitman’s legacy is an unfinished one and Whitman waits of greet their
efforts at the dawn of the twenty-first.

So many proper names-cities, mountains, rivers, countries- are included in
his poem (Salut Au Monde!) that it is very difficult to find a parallel in modern
poetry where the sound of proper names alone is enough to lull the reader’s mind.
It is the romance of geography: and at the same time a proof of Whitman’s interest
in the universe as a whole. His international outlook, his deep sympathy for the
common man, his ability to identify himself with strange lands and people—all
these traits are present in this poem. As he himself sums up:

My spirit has pass’d in compassion and determination around
The whole earth,
I have look’d for equals and lovers and found them ready for
Me in all lands,
I think some divine rapport has equalized me with them.
Thus, different poets may conceive the city with different perspectives. No matter how conceived, the city has played a large part in human destiny since many years. It has created historical rhythm of its own, even as its functions changed and its reality was constructed and transformed. Urban constructs must be continuously reexamined: they are, to be sure, artificial and diverse; but through them we interpret the past, test our sense of reality, and structure of future. And the city for better or worse is our future.

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