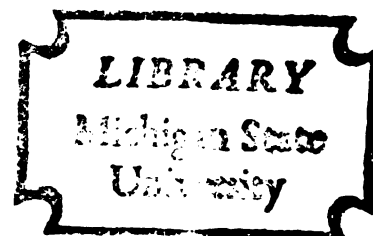


ENERGY AND EVENT AS MOTIVE,
MOTIF AND DESIGN IN THE POETRY
OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

Dissertation for the Degree of Ph. D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
BEULAH PEARL BAKER
1976



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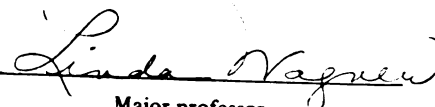
ENERGY AND EVENT AS MOTIVE
MOTIF AND DESIGN IN THE POETRY
OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

presented by

Beulah P. Baker

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in English


Major professor

Date October 28, 1976

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ABSTRACT

ENERGY AND EVENT AS MOTIVE, MOTIF AND DESIGN IN THE POETRY OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

By

Beulah Pearl Baker

William Carlos Williams was one of the first modern American poets to force literary critics to devise a new set of critical terms. Williams himself proclaimed the variable foot and triadic line and the poem as a field of action; and Charles Olson spoke of kinetic and projective verse. Along with our understanding of these critical terms comes an awareness of just how radical a shift Williams initiated in poetic theory. To read a Williams poem is to participate on the structural level in fluctuating energies described by modern physics and Whitehead's cosmology.

In his 1963 study, Poets of Reality, J. Hillis Miller recognized in Williams' poems a timely solution to the troublesome Cartesian duality. What Miller could not account for adequately was a motive for writing once poetry no longer functions primarily to marry the poet with his world. This motive is apparent in those

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scientific and philosophical theories which identify energy as the essence of reality. Objects extend their energies to the poet and exhibit a power of attraction, which demands his participation. Understood in terms of relativity and in the dynamics of Whitehead's event, images organize themselves into a dynamic field containing the poet himself. Williams can claim in Paterson that "to measure is all we know" because he defines nature primarily in terms of relationships, which he seeks to capture through the measure and configuration of a poem. Thus, the theories of physics and Alfred North Whitehead's definition of reality as an event prove useful in exploring the motives, motifs and designs of Williams' verse. For, as he stressed in a series of early essays, Williams firmly believed that poetry is the embodiment of that knowledge toward which science and philosophy aspire. As embodied knowledge, poetry can assist both poet and reader to locate their energies and to engage in the design of the actual.

As he negotiates with the forces of his world, Williams transmits energy through the machinery of a poem. He values motion so highly that he defines death as a failure of the imagination to keep forces flowing. His technical skills progress from charged images in a loose form, to surface statements about mind and structure, to a unity primarily on the structural level,

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to a final maturity in which structural forces convey intense images of contemplative value.

In this study I view Williams' poems as configurations embodying the energies of the actual. Chapter I reviews the major changes in Williams' imagination and defines the role of energy in modern poetic theory. Chapter II extends the concept of a metric figure into the ethic of motion which governs Williams' poetic theory. I explore the relation of the natural to the mechanical, the possible structures of a poem, and the motion of the mind. In noting the cosmology which results once Williams locates the motion of the mind among the forces of nature, I am led to an analysis of Whitehead's design of the actual in Chapter III and to a recognition of its correspondence to Williams' poetic designs. Finally, Chapter IV proposes that an ethic of persuasion results once Williams' energy is channeled through the design of Whitehead's event. I compare this aesthetic to that of Charles Olson and then conclude with a summary and a comment upon Williams' final poems.

Williams obviously is interested in concrete particulars. He assumes, however, that value inheres in particulars as they relate to each other in an evolving design comprised of the present occasion. Hence, he retains interest in modernism's formalism, but not as an arbitrary design. Rather, it is a radical design,

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capturing actuality in its structure to the extent that art ceases to refer to reality and becomes itself a part of life's creative process. He resolves post-modernism's concern with multiplicity and modernism's need for a uniting form by allowing both limited and comprehensive points of view. Thus, he is able to explore the infinite variety of the parts while maintaining the ultimate integrity of the whole viewed as an organic event. He discovers subjective energies inherent in the acts of perception and in prereflective experience, but he also locates energy in objective reality. He sees the poem both as the projective verse of the poet, in which lines are rapid and progressive, and as a design of the actual, in which energies imitate the varying intensities of experience.

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ENERGY AND EVENT AS MOTIVE, MOTIF AND
DESIGN IN THE POETRY OF WILLIAM
CARLOS WILLIAMS

By

Beulah Pearl Baker

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

1976

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express warm thanks to Dr. Linda Wagner for her encouragement and the resources she had to offer in directing this study. I also thank all my friends at John Wesley College for their support and especially Dr. David Basinger for helping me to clarify my ideas on Whitehead and philosophical issues. Kathryn Johnson deserves credit for helping to type sections of the early draft. I am also grateful to my parents for their loving concern in my moments of frustration.

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INTRODUCTION

As literary critics, we tend to become attached to our literary tools. Once we have become proficient in identifying figurative language and rhetorical devices, we expect all poetic soil to yield a few similes and a fine crop of paradox, irony and wit. Although we approve of fewer rhymes and set rhythms, we still appreciate finding a few traditional forms and techniques to keep our critical tools sharpened.

William Carlos Williams was one of the first modern American poets to elude our tidy collection of terms. He set out to cultivate a new soil--in the American grain, as he said. Already much spade work has been done on his works, and new critical tools have been created to describe modern poetic techniques. Williams himself proclaimed the variable foot and triadic line and the poem as a field of action; and Charles Olson taught us to think in terms of kinetic and projective verse. Along with our understanding of these critical terms comes an awareness of just how radical a shift Williams initiated in poetic theory. To read a Williams poem is not an occasion to enter a static form but rather a

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challenge to engage ourselves in the fluctuating energies described by modern physics and Whitehead's cosmology. Shorn of many traditional tools of criticism, we must devote our attention to the dynamics of the process through which Williams unleashes native energies into poetic configurations.

When a poet expressly rejects traditional forms, he is thrown back upon his own ingenuity. As Hugh Kenner so ably demonstrates, a poet such as Williams becomes one of those makers of a homemade world, self-reliant according to the American spirit.¹ It is perhaps too easy to equate self-reliance with ignorance. In the first book of Paterson, Williams admits that "In ignorance" there is "a certain knowledge" (P, 4), for ignorance allows one the joy of personal discovery. Yet, he also hints that the "ignorant sun" is only superficially uninformed in that it answers to historic demands by rising anew "in the slot of / hollow suns risen" (P, 4). Thus, the universe sets a standard of cyclic vitality which transcends its permanence, even as our own awareness must learn to renew itself. For, "'unless the scent of a rose / startle us anew'" (P, 239), our lives stagnate into the commonplace. Like Wordsworth, Williams values that childlike capacity which allows one to view the world as though it were for the first time. He opposes systematic thought only because it tends to be programmed and repetitious, precluding the honesty and immediacy of poetic vision.

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In his spirit of independence and invention, Williams identifies himself with those poets who write what Robert Langbaum calls a poetry of experience. According to Langbaum's definition, the trademark of this poetic process is personal discovery. "It makes no difference," Langbaum claims, "whether the romanticist arrives in the end at a new formulation or returns to the old one." Rather, it is "the process of denial and reaffirmation which distinguishes him both from those who have never denied and those who, having denied, have never reaffirmed."² Some affirmation is necessary, but it must be an affirmation which the poet discovers from his immediate experience; he cannot merely adopt inherited dogmas. Furthermore, experience itself must be constantly renewed so that the poet does not become a dogma to himself, failing to achieve further growth and discovery. As Williams would say, the poet must return to the ground (CLP, 23).

The need for constant renewal is central to Williams' dislike for philosophy and science. These disciplines come to represent for Williams that tendency in man to embalm knowledge--to achieve a changeless absolute which quickly becomes remote and irrelevant. Attacking them ruthlessly in the essays of The Embodiment of Knowledge, he insists that

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. . . the crudity and grossness of both philosophy and science is that they attempt to do away with time in an absurd absolute which--by the very lack of time makes them--to say the least inhuman.

(EK, 87-88)

Perfecting themselves as systems, they fail to maintain contact with the evolving nature of the actual. To avoid this deadly process, the truth of art "must be restated continually in each age in the material of that age to be true" (EK, 87-88).

It is perhaps ironic to turn to science and philosophy as sources for critical language when Williams attacked these fields so vigorously throughout his career. Yet, Williams does draw from both of these disciplines for imagery, structure and force. Stripped of its rhetoric, his contention is that poetry differs from science and philosophy precisely because it exceeds them. Philosophical abstractions cannot masquerade as poems, nor can philosophy explain poetry fully since

The category of art is incapable of correct definition in terms of philosophy. The category of art is another thing with its own particular function the time for the full exercise of which is now approaching, a function beyond the scope of philosophy.

(I, 303)

Praising his favorite philosophers in "Choral: the Pink Church," Williams defines their limits to be the place where the self, transparent to the light, stands singing:

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 O James! (William)
 O Whitehead!
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 --above and beyond
 your teaching stands
 the Pink Church:

(CLP, 161)

Similarly, science is not the primary avenue to truth, for

The actual is another field, the field of art, which must liberate from the defects of philosophy and science, body, mind and morals. There are extraordinary recesses of the understanding still untouched by any practiced mode of approach--which artists have found accessible since the beginning of time--more fully to be appreciated and explored.

(I, 304)

Poetry, then, is the process whereby man achieves knowledge in concrete terms. Sensitive to the details and essence of experience, the poet records configurations of reality through the agency of his imagination. His faculties differ from those of the scientist and philosopher primarily in his commitment to those "extraordinary recesses of the understanding" which the precision of science precludes. Although it is not antithetical to science and philosophy, poetry is superior because it is more firmly grounded in man's experience; "Poems must be--and this partakes of technique--considered as documents of men" (EK, 74). The measure of their worth is the increase of knowledge they offer:

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So . . . is the explanation why at the beginning of a movement, when a new form is set, the chief poems are created. It is not novelty, though of necessity the great must [be] the new, it is the increase of knowledge that is the deciding point.

(EK, 75)

The knowledge of which Williams speaks is practical and human. It is "essential, delightful, human--as that you should never wash a pie plate or a rolling pin" (EK, 63). Knowledge per se is just a machine:

. . . science, as the codified sum of knowledge is stupid and inhuman--unless we achieve toward it the same relationship that we find most essential, delightful, human, in any of its parts. Unless we stand beyond it and not it beyond us to order us, it is no more than an evidence of our ignorance, in all its perfection, another machine whose scope apart from the mere practical one of wheels going around and moulding tin or dough--we have not surmounted. It is plain ignorance, the modern deception, in fact the most modern, as philosophy is the oldest but of the same sort.

(EK, 63)

Only by embodying knowledge in human terms--"by realizing its function and its place as subordinate to himself--oddly metaphysical as it may sound" (EK, 63), can one confront actuality. Knowledge for Williams is not an end in itself, but a means of realizing one's humanity.

Thus, in the final analysis, ignorance is not bliss. A necessary point of entry, ignorance must ultimately be replaced with a knowledge gained from experience. The knowledge of death, of the dispersal of energy, of constant renewal, is the goal and design:

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 thereby, in addition and subtraction,
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(P, 4)

Once such knowledge is gained, it must then be shared,
 for "knowledge, / undispersed, [is] its own undoing"
 (P, 4).

Historically, science has helped to define the physical and chemical forces of our world and their resultant designs, while philosophy has explored modes of being (ontology) and knowing (epistemology) and resultant criterias for action (ethics). The logic of abstract thought, including mathematics, has governed both fields. Poetry likewise is concerned with force, design, being, knowing and action--only the poet's terms are different, depending upon the inspired images and rhythms of poetry rather than upon philosophical abstractions. As the New Critics remind us, we must always treat poetry as poetry. Yet, to the extent that Williams in fact did find useful concepts and values in science and philosophy, and in light of the fact that philosophy and science often claim an aesthetic design, there is an overlapping of terms. Recently, science has become increasingly concerned with sources and conveyors of energy; and with the works of

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Alfred North Whitehead, philosophy has emphasized processes and the creative nature of our world. Like Williams, Whitehead recognized the relation between ground and form (RM, 113). Thus, science and philosophy have abandoned static patterns for an increasingly dynamic interpretation of nature and reality. The concepts of energy and event prove useful in exploring the motives, motifs and designs of Williams' verse. For, as he stressed in a series of rather redundant, early essays, Williams firmly believed that poetry is the embodiment of that knowledge toward which science and philosophy aspire. As embodied knowledge, modern poetry can assist both poet and reader to locate their energies and to engage themselves in the design of the actual.

Early reviews of Williams' poetry tended to scan the literal surfaces of the poems and to find a disarray of unanchored objects strewn across the poetic landscape. These early critics saw only the glistening surface of an inverted bell, even as Williams had seen in the books of his Paterson library; and they assumed that the poems were hollow and superficial. For them, Williams was anti-intellectual. They had yet to discover that the "concentric rainbow of cold fire" (P, 118) left on the surface of a created object evidenced a complexity of construction and of interpretation. Primarily, they overlooked the

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reader's responsibility to the creative process--an involvement prophesied by Walt Whitman in "Democratic Vistas":

In fact, a new theory of literary composition for imaginative works of the very finest class, and especially for highest poems, is the sole course open to these States. Books are to be call'd for and supplied, on the assumption that the process of reading is not a half-asleep, but, in highest sense, an exercise, a gymnast's struggle; that the reader is to do something for himself, must be on the alert, must himself or herself construct indeed the poem, argument, history, metaphysical essay--the text furnishing the hints, the clue, the start or frame-work.³

Williams betrays the fact that he shares this assumption when he writes in a 1950 notebook:

Always, in a work of art, leave a large part to the imagination of the spectator, thus to arouse his imagination also (never block it) & give him work to do. For that is the prime destination of the thing produced, the created object, the new born infant, to have the beholder through his imagination take part in it, thus & only thus to complete it.⁴

Not until the sixties did criticism really rise to the challenge of applying Whitman's claim ("The reader will always have his or her part to do, just as much as I have had mine") to Williams' poetry. Linda Wagner assumed that Williams was a conscious craftsman, and she provided correlations between the poems and Williams' critical statements in her 1963 study.⁵ Similarly, in 1968 James Guimond gave careful attention to the later poems.⁶ There

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is now a growing list of excellent studies which respect Williams as a significant contributor to American literature.

Some of the most challenging scholarship on Williams deals specifically with Williams' perception of reality. In 1961 Roy Harvey Pearce sought to locate Williams in The Continuity of American Poetry. Pearce noted that in Paterson, Book Five, Williams sought to move beyond the need for mediation between subject and object to a world where subject and object are fused. Pearce viewed this fusion negatively, deciding that Williams "has pushed his line to a point where it has become a means of treating persons and places solely as aspects of himself."⁷ Thus, Paterson Five was "an incantatory poem" to Pearce, "the Adamic poet's unmediated vision" which "counterpoints only itself."⁸ J. Hillis Miller agreed with Pearce that Williams constructed a unified world, but he regarded Williams' vision more positively than did Pearce. Instead of a falling-off, Miller recognized in Williams a timely solution to the troublesome Cartesian duality. According to Miller, Williams achieved the reconciliation toward which the Romantics had struggled. What Miller could not account for adequately was the continuing motive for poetry in a poet who seemed to be comfortably at home in his world. To account for poetry, he could only claim that

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Williams' poetry takes language for granted. . . . His plunge into the substance of things does not reach a shapeless blur in which all distinctions have been lost. The world is within rather than at a distance, but it is still full of things existing in the exactness of their forms. Beside the other things there are words.⁹

Miller is right in his awareness that a poet like Williams writes naturally because objects and words are very much present to him. There are, however, explanations in science and philosophy which clarify Williams' position. Modern science confronts us with the theory that energy is of the essence of reality. By his interest in physics, Williams betrays a susceptibility to objects and words not only because they indeed exist, but more specifically, because they have a power of attraction. His fascination with the theory of relativity suggests a sensitivity to those relationships which he seeks to capture through the measure and configuration of a poem. Williams can claim that "to measure is all we know" (P, 239) because he defines nature primarily in terms of relationships.

Alan Ostrom explored Williams' world of relationships in general terms in his 1966 study. He discovered the fact that "Williams sees the poem's value in its ability to use the actual as its materials and give to them an order by (and in) which the reader can perceive the underlying reality."¹⁰ He also identified and named three modes of being in Williams' work--"(1) that which we perceive with the senses (actuality), (2) that which

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is but may be unperceived (reality), and (3) that which we wish (ideality)."¹¹ Ostrom points toward the means whereby we may view the design of a Williams poem as a paradigm not only of actuality but of reality and ideality as well. For this total vision, I use the term actuality.

Mike Weaver provides more specific information on the intellectual backgrounds which informed Williams' world view and which allowed Williams to attempt a new poetic for a new world.¹² Among the facts of his thorough investigation, Weaver reveals the extent to which Williams was acquainted with the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. Although direct influence from Whitehead was slight upon a man of Williams' independence, it is obvious that Whitehead articulates philosophically a cosmology similar to that which Williams depicts poetically. Jerome Mazzaro discusses Whitehead briefly in his study of the later poems.¹³ Yet, correlations between Williams and Whitehead have remained primarily implied and relatively unexplored. John Scott offers many useful correlations between modern poetry and philosophy, but he concentrates on the works of C. S. Peirce, William James and John Dewey as representatives of what Stephen Pepper calls a contextualist approach.¹⁴ Joseph Riddel takes a totally different approach and delves into the less useful philosophies of Husserl, Heidegger and Derrida.¹⁵ Thus, the background of science and of Whitehead remains relatively unexplored.

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In this study I have sought to focus upon the poems themselves as much as possible, using Williams' own criticism as an index to his intentions. I have selected some new tools from science and philosophy since these help to identify the internal workings of a Williams poem. Primarily, I find that the theories of physics and the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead help to define the energy and space of a poem--although they can only point toward the "extraordinary recesses of the understanding" which Williams approaches.

In a sense, poetry of all ages has involved the transfer of some form of energy, most traditionally as an idea transfer from poet to reader. Energy per se is a contemporary preoccupation, however, so recent as to divide our own twentieth century. In distinguishing between the high modernism of Yeats, Eliot and Pound and the quality of contemporary verse, Charles Altieri claims,

We might summarize these differences as an opposition between the earlier, essentially symbolist poetic concerned primarily with the powers of the imagination to create values and structures for interpreting experience and the more recent concern for discovering the energies and possible moral forces inherent in acts of perception and in our immediate prereflective experiences of nature and society.¹⁶

Much has been written of late to clarify the difference between modernism and post-modernism. Maurice Beebe supplies a good summary. He identifies "a pre-occupation with form itself" as a major distinguishing

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feature of modernism, even though this formalism is displayed as an attempt to break the limitations of traditional forms.¹⁷ Hence, there is an emphasis upon "the importance of structure and design--the esthetic autonomy and independent whatness of the work of art."¹⁸ Secondly,

Modernism is characterized by an attitude of detachment and non-commitment which I would put under the general heading of "irony" in the sense of that term as used by the New Critics. Third, Modernist literature makes use of myth not in the way myth was used earlier, as a discipline for belief or a subject of interpretation, but as an arbitrary means of ordering art. And finally, I would date the Age of Modernism from the time of the Impressionist because I think there is a clear line of development from Impressionism to reflexivism. Modernist art turns back upon itself and is largely concerned with its own creation and composition. The Impressionists' insistence that the viewer is more important than the subject viewed leads ultimately to the solipsistic worlds-within-worlds of Modernist art and literature.¹⁹

By contrast, the post-modernists seem to prefer "content over form, emotional commitment over irony, 'contingency' over 'mythotherapy,' and the group over its members."²⁰

Quoting Richard Wasson, Beebe clarifies these concerns as the post-modern "desire to get back to particulars, to restore literary language to its proper role which for them means revealing 'the raggedness,' the incompleteness of it all. They want a literature which accurately presents man's place in a world of contingency, a world in which man is free to cope spontaneously with experience."²¹

Where does Williams fit in this discussion?

Joseph Riddel places him well within the post-modern period,

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claiming that "Rejecting this search for some lost center, authority, presence, or plentitude, Williams turns to the local as a centerless center, and rediscovers the 'joy' of Nietzschean invention."²² In addressing himself primarily to Williams' language experiments and to his "deconstruction" of old forms, Riddel reduces Williams to an endless cycle devoid of the warmth that is so apparent in his verse. For Riddel, what endures for Williams is indeed "man's search for value, the recurrent effort to create value." However, "the search is conducted in the recognition that there is no ultimate value, that the hunt itself excludes the purity of capture."²³

Williams obviously is interested in the post-modern concern of getting back to particulars. He assumes, however, that value inheres in particulars as they relate to each other in an evolving design comprised of the present occasion. Hence, he retains interest in modernism's formalism, but not as an arbitrary design. Rather, it is a radical design, capturing actuality in its structure to the extent that art ceases to refer to reality and becomes itself a part of life's creative process.

One might be tempted to see Williams as a bridge between modernism and post-modernism, or as a compromise. Elizabeth Meese throws out the suggestion that "Williams, the post-modernist, who refuses to order the world on

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terms other than its own, struggles with Williams, the modernist, who seeks the comfort and order of reconciliation and synthesis."²⁴ However, Williams is seen best as achieving a unique solution outside the modernist/post-modernist controversy. Williams manages to resolve post-modernism's concern with multiplicity and modernism's need for a uniting form by allowing both limited and comprehensive points of view. Thus, he is able to explore the infinite variety of the parts while maintaining the ultimate integrity of the whole viewed as an organic event. He discovers subjective energies inherent in the acts of perception and in prereflective experience, but he also locates energy in objective reality. To do this, he breaks free from the Cartesian dichotomy and places himself among the objects of his world so that the energies of subject and object no longer remain distinct but rather reciprocate and even interpenetrate. Finally, he sees the poem both as the projective verse of the poet (as developed by Charles Olson toward the end of Williams' life) in which poetic lines are rapid and progressive, and as a design of the actual, in which energies imitate the varying intensities of experience.

In this study I view Williams' poems as configurations embodying the energies of the actual. Chapter I reviews the major changes in Williams' imagination and defines the role of energy in modern poetic theory.

Chapter II

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Chapter II extends the metric figure into the ethic of motion which governs Williams' poetic theory. In noting the cosmology which results once Williams locates the motion of the mind among the forces of nature, I am led to an analysis of Whitehead's design of the actual in Chapter III and to a recognition of its correspondence to Williams' poetic designs. Finally, Chapter IV proposes that an ethic of persuasion results once Williams' energy is channeled through the design of Whitehead's event. I compare this aesthetic to that of Charles Olson and then conclude with a summary and a comment upon Williams' final poems.

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CHAPTER I

ENERGY AND THE IMAGINATION

"When I was inclined to write poems," Williams reminisced in 1958, "I was very definitely an American kid, confident of himself and also independent. . . . If poetry had to be written, I had to do it my own way" (IWWP, 14).

Williams maintained this sense of independence throughout his writing career. To him, poetry was neither academic nor superfluous. It was an integral part of his daily life, reflecting the speech and images of his local setting, forged in the fire of his personal imagination. It was a stabilizer, a means of focus, a musical dance ordering his experiences. As late as 1954 he recorded poetically what must have been a typical dialogue:

You seem quite normal. Can you tell me? Why does one want to write a poem?

Because it's there to be written.

Oh. A matter of inspiration then?

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(PB, 117-18)

The fact that Williams wrote prolifically and independently does not mean, however, that he was not a careful craftsman. On the contrary, although he was willing to admit his limitations, he could only be offended by any hint that he might ever shirk his obligations as a controlling artist. Irately, he declares,

Say I am less an artist
than a spadeworker but one
who has no aversion to taking
his spade to the head
of any who would derogate
his performance in the craft.

(CLP, 235)

His constant concern was to find the suitable vehicle through which to express his restless imagination--to make the perfect machine which would do justice to his private voice, to his American identity and to his contemporary setting. Because of his continuing search, his poetic style underwent many changes.

The flight of the imagination in his poetry displays a variety between the two extremes of Keats' nightingale and the hawk of "The Monstrous Marriage." In its search for beauty, sometimes it alights upon chicory and daisies, while at other times it dips down into "the

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gutter, where everything comes / from, the manure heap." Sometimes its task is apparently effortless; at other times it flounders against impossible odds. Williams recognized this diversity in himself and commented once, "It is curious that I was so preoccupied with the studied elegance of Keats on the one hand and with the raw vigor of Whitman on the other" (IWWP, 8).

Williams' earliest work betrays the fact that he was tempted to escape into romantic themes. Gods, goddesses and salamanders troop through his verse; he also attempted an imitation of Keats' "Endymion." In a short poem from The Tempers, he acknowledges the anachronistic character of this early aesthetic:

So art thou broken in upon me, Apollo,
Through a splendor of purple garments--
Held by the yellow-haired Clymene
To clothe the white of thy shoulders--
Bare from the day's leaping of horses,
This is strange to me, here in the modern twilight.

(CEP, 22)

Williams never totally renounces this early search for beauty, but he does renounce the stilted diction and extravagant imagery. He retains the method of allowing beauty to break in upon him, but he domesticates his nightingale. This transition is most obvious in a later poem, which he entitles "The Nightingale":

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My shoes as I lean
 unlacing them
 stand out upon
 flat worsted flowers.

Nimbly the shadows
 of my fingers play
 unlacing
 over shoes and flowers.

(CEP, 224)

The first stanza of this poem is a personal description of an habitual action, usually performed mechanically. The second stanza lifts the description from the ordinary through metaphor. The poem is made more compact by placing the identity of the metaphor in the title, as Williams often does in his poetry. Hence, there is the juxtaposition of three interacting parts--title, and two stanzas.

The workings of the poem are more involved than the length might suggest. First, the reader is drawn into the persona's perspective through the use of the first person, singular. Even the directional focus is that of the persona: "my shoes as I lean." Next, a sense of the action described is captured in the organic form by isolating "unlacing them" into a separate line. The emerging size of the shoes ("stand out") overwhelms the flatness of the flowers on the carpet beneath.

Stanza two takes on action with the initial word Nimbly and then with the verb play. The action is now animated with fluttering shadows; note the lightness which is obtained by observing only the shadows of the fingers.

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Hence, the tediousness of unlacing is now charged with the motion of moving shadows and is accentuated by the isolation of the word unlacing on line seven. Although shoes and flowers are unmodified in the concluding line, they appear much more descriptive than when previously modified.

The final impact of the poem comes in retrospect. The comparison to the nightingale is now obvious, but that romantic symbol for the imagination has been merged with an everyday experience. Consequently, a routine task is vitalized and revealed as an action of beauty. Hence, Williams has married the imagination to the actual world, raising commonplace experiences to an imaginative intensity and yet allowing them to remain in the real world.

Originally, Williams tells us, "The Nightingale" contained the flaw of one redundant part. His first version placed the line "under my feet" at the end of the first stanza. But, "in the normal process of concentrating the poem, getting rid of redundancies in the line . . . in the attempt to make it go faster," he wisely removed the line (IWWP, 66).

Economy of style, local images, vernacular language--these are the beginning changes in Williams' art. Typically, the result is a moment of unanticipated beauty. However, the imagination is not always capable of the beauty of the nightingale, precisely because of

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its dedication to the real world. Sometimes the poet's efforts to touch a wounded world result in a monstrous marriage.

Vivian Koch identifies the poem "The Monstrous Marriage" as one of Williams' investigations into the nature of love--a topic with which he was concerned during the 1940's.¹ Her interpretation, however, fails to pay attention to the pronouns and to suggest the richness of the imagery; for the poem is more than a simple love poem. It is also an allegory of the poet's love for his world.

The opening stanzas of the poem describe a woman's sympathy for a wounded pigeon and her attempts to assist it. As a result, the pain of the bird is transferred to the woman as she works to calm it by enveloping it with her own thoughts:

She who with innocent and tender hands
reached up to take the wounded
pigeon from the branch, found it turn

into a fury as it bled. Maddened she clung
to it stabbed by its pain and the blood
of her hands and the bird's blood

mingled while she stilled it for the moment
and wrapped it in her thought's
clean white handkerchief.

It is thus that the poet uses the sympathy of his female principle to reach out to the world--a sympathy like that of Abraham Lincoln as described in In the American Grain:

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It is Lincoln pardoning the fellow who slept on sentry duty. It is the grace of the Bixby letters. The least private would find a woman to caress him, a woman in an old shawl--with a great bearded face and a towering black hat above it, to give unearthly reality.²

The pain of the experience is too great, however, for the poet to remain so vulnerable. A change of identity is necessary to obtain more strength and also, more clarity of vision:

. . . After that

she adopted a hawk's life as her own.
For it looked up and said, You are
my wife for this. Then she released him.

But he came back shortly. Certainly,
since we are married, she said to him, no
one will accept it. Time passed.

I try to imitate you, he said while she
cried a little in smiling. Mostly,
he confided, my head is clouded

except for hunting. But for parts of
a day it's clear as any man's--by
your love. No, she would

answer him pitifully, what clearer than
a hawk's eye and reasonably the
mind also must be so. . . .

Already, the two identities are beginning to merge. The woman as hawk is still the woman of tender hands, while the pigeon takes on hawk-like qualities. The identification becomes more explicit in the next lines:

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. . . He turned his
 head and seeing his profile in her
 mirror ruffled his feathers and gave
 a hawk's cry, desolately.

Sympathetic and reciprocal as the relationship is, it is
 censored by others and hence must be camouflaged:

Nestling upon her as was his wont he
 hid his talons from her soft flesh
 fluttering his wings against her sides
 until her mind, always astonished at
 his assumptions, agonized, heard
 footsteps and hurried him to
 the open window whence he made off.
 After that she had a leather belt made
 upon which he perched to enjoy her.

(CLP, 53-54)

The identification between the two members of
 the allegory of this poem becomes so close that they seem
 to exchange characters in a way which makes the sense of
 the allegory difficult to follow. But this threat to
 identity is just the point. If the poet refuses to
 adapt the world to his own needs but insists instead
 upon the reality of the object, he opens himself to a
 reciprocal relationship. Williams is willing to admit
 that although sometimes the poet can release beauty from
 the world through the attention of the imagination, at
 other times all he can do is pattern the world into its
 recognizable forms. At these times, "Rigor of beauty is
 the quest" (P, 11).

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Williams recognizes the risk he is taking in refusing to desert his local world. In "Passer Domesticus" he indulgently chides his imagination for its shabbiness in contrast to the nightingale:

Shabby little bird
 I suppose it's
 the story every-
 where, if you're
 domestic you're drab.
 Peep peep!
 the nightingale
 's your cousin but
 these flagrant
 amours get you no-
 where. Dull
 to the eye you have
 crept in unmolested.

(CEP, 456)

Again, in "The Cure," no doubt thinking of Eliot, Pound and Joyce, he confesses,

Sometimes I envy others, fear them
 a little too, if they write well.
 For when I cannot write I'm a sick man
 and want to die. The cause is plain.

But they have no access to my sources.
 Let them write then as they may and
 perfect it as they can they will never
 come to the secret of that form

interknit with the unfathomable ground
 where we walk daily and from which
 among the rest you have sprung
 and opened flower-like to my hand.

(CLP, 23)

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Fortunately, Williams did not relinquish his allegiance to his own ground just because the cost was high. Instead, he explored the means by which one can survive in his local soil. This survival was possible primarily through the poet's dedication to the process of imitation. Williams insists,

How shall we get said what must be said?

Only the poem.

Only the counted poem, to an exact measure:
to imitate, not to copy nature, not
to copy nature

NOT, prostrate, to copy nature
but a dance! to dance

(PB, 108-09)

Aristotle divided imitation into two kinds of instincts. The first instinct was that of mimesis--a universal pleasure in seeing things represented. Hence, "Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity. . . ." ³ The pleasure arises, Aristotle suggests, from the enjoyment of recognition. The second instinct inherent in art is one for harmony and rhythm. Williams follows Aristotle in pursuing this dual interest; but in identifying the process of nature as the essence of actuality, he makes rhythm and measure integral to representation. Even in his early poems in which he creates primarily a visual mimesis, he claims an interest

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in motion. He also values the image which has but now been born--to the poet's awareness, if not to actuality. He insists that imitation is not a passive act: the poet does not merely hold a mirror up to nature. Rather, the poet captures the freshness of the original creative act, penetrating directly to the ground of experience so that relationships can emerge anew. Rhythmic and harmonious verse forms are integral to this act. Thus, the poet does not so much create a new world as he recaptures the energy of the original creative act.⁴

The term which Williams uses to describe his combination of the two aspects of imitation is metric figure. Of Al Que Quiere!, published in 1917, Williams claims, "I was interested in the construction of an image before the image was popular in poetry. The poem 'Metric Figure' is an example. I was influenced by mother's still lifes. I was looking for a metric figure--a new measure. I couldn't find it and I couldn't wait for it. I was too impatient; I had to write" (IWWP, 21-22). This first metric figure betrays the exuberance of Williams' early period:

There is a bird in the poplars!
 It is the sun!
 The leaves are little yellow fish
 swimming in the river.
 The bird skims above them,
 day is on his wings.
 Phoebus!
 It is he that is making
 the great gleam among the poplars!

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It is his singing
 outshines the noise
 of leaves clashing in the wind.

(CEP, 123)

As he entered his Objectivist period, Williams pruned away his figurative language and concentrated on the thing itself. Typically, his meter took on a high degree of control, contributing to the rigorous clarity of the description. The title of a poem from this period reveals his emphasis upon the figure itself:

THE GREAT FIGURE

Among the rain
 and lights
 I saw the figure 5
 in gold
 on a red
 firetruck
 moving
 tense
 unheeded
 to gong clangs
 siren howls
 and wheels rumbling
 through the dark city.

(CEP, 230)

Finally, in his later poems, Williams concentrated upon expressing an ordinary experience or event in a meter flexibly indicative of the subtleties of the experience itself. His final achievement in the combination of image and meter is obvious in a poem from Pictures from Brueghel, which returns to the original title of "Metric Figure":

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or psychiatric couch or booth

(PB, 36)

In this poem, Williams demonstrates his skill for representing local scenes in colloquial language. He also shows the power of the imagination to take an event which is usually ignored or at best endured, and to raise it to a moment of value and insight. Williams provides both levels of Aristotelian pleasure in his realistic representation. In addition, the implied metaphor in the concluding stanza suggests a serious truth without being didactic. In short, the poem validates Williams' earlier claim that he is not "in search of 'the beautiful illusion' . . . To refine, to clarify, to intensify that eternal moment in which we alone live there is but a single force--the imagination" (I, 89).

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Modern science alerts us to the importance of energy not only as a source of power. More basically, science now conceives energy to be of the essence of nature. According to Whitehead, the science of physics regards a natural occasion as a locus of energy:

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Whatever else that occasion may be, it is an individual fact harboring that energy. The words electron, proton, photon, wave-motion, velocity, hard and soft radiation, chemical elements, matter, empty space, temperature, degradation of energy, all point to the fact that physical science recognizes qualitative differences between occasions in respect to the way in which each occasion entertains its energy.

(AI, 238)

By identifying the discussion of the Poynting Flux of Energy as one of the most fascinating chapters of Electrodynamics, Whitehead points toward the modern awareness that energy inheres in all things and "has recognizable paths through time and space. Energy passes from particular occasion to particular occasion. At each point there is a flux, with quantitative flow and a definite direction" (AI, 238). Thus, he describes the modern world as an existence infused with psychic, nuclear and/or chemical forces.

At first, Williams identified the power of his imagination to be of a different order. In his early poem, "The Wanderer" (CEP, 3-12), he portrays a romantic youth longing for flight at the same time that he responds in a Whitmanesque fashion to the "electric" quality of life around him. His old crone prepares him for "the high courses," and she is to him "The mighty, recreating the whole world." Then, suddenly, she reveals the scene below him in all its starkness and brings him to the

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point at which "The ecstasy was over, the life begun."
 As he undergoes his baptismal plunge into the filthy
 Passaic, his mission is clearly defined as the need to
 engage himself in the energies of the actual.

The poet who aims toward an unconditional
 acceptance of his environment must determine how he is
 to cope with the joys and sorrows it presents. He places
 himself in a reciprocal relationship in which he is some-
 times primarily influenced, while at other times he
 assumes the initiative. Power is evenly divided, unless
 confusion results.

The possibility of confusion was real enough for
 Williams to deal with it in the poem, "To Have Done
 Nothing" (CEP, 247-48). Williams begins with an off-
 hand verbal exercise, breaking the title into its literal
 parts; then he glides into the paradoxical claim that
nothing is a part of everything,

if to do
 is capable
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To add to the complexity, Williams in mock-didacticism
 enters these combinations under the domain of the moral,
 physical and religious codes. The final reductio ad
absurdum makes his point:

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Williams avoids the immobilizing power of confusion by paying attention to first one and then another source of energy. Wallace Stevens was right when he accused Williams of changing his points of view (see SE, 12-13). However, as a man more dedicated to energy than to metaphysical discussions, Williams found it necessary to switch to changing sources of power until he could reconcile his energies into the unity of his final works.

Many of Williams' early poems find an exuberance in nature which is almost overwhelming. "What is most striking about all the poems," Townley observes of Williams' 1917 Al Que Quiere!,

is their energy. Like Antaeus, whose strength suddenly redoubled when he touched the ground, Williams found vast resources of energy in himself as soon as he abandoned the abstractions of his earlier work and "confined" himself to mundane subjects. . . .⁵

The frequent image of a gusting wind suggests the unpredictable and sometimes troublesome nature of these forces.

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In rare cases, as in "The Yachts," natural forces represent potentially destructive social conditions. More frequently, however, the natural energy of biological life expresses positive values. Williams describes Nature so vividly that biological charges seem literally to flow into a verse form. A classic example of the method of this aesthetic is found in the poem "The Trees," in which

The trees--being trees
thrash and scream
guffaw and curse--
wholly abandoned
damning the race of men--

As the trees demonstrate their fulness of life in onomatopoeic chatter, the point of view shifts completely from that of the observer-poet to that of the trees themselves:

Loose desire!
we naked cry to you--
"Do what you please."

But, "You cannot!" they taunt, because you are "--ghosts / sapped of strength" whose desire is "dead in the heart." Unlike men who have mythologized the past into satyrs and maenads and eagle-headed gods, the trees remember when men were their companions. The memory is so vivid that once again the point of view shifts, this time to those primitive men who led lives as exposed as that of the trees,

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--a cold wind winterlong
 in the hollows of our flesh
 icy with pleasure--

no part of us untouched

(CEP, 66-67)

Not all of Williams' trees are equal in their level of energy. In "Trees" (CEP, 142), there is an ascending scale of power, compared to a musical scale. Below, "how easily the long yellow notes / of poplars flow upward in a descending / scale." Toward the top of the hill, however, stands the lone "Crooked, black tree," "ridiculously raised one step toward / the infinite summits of the night." There are two motives which stretch the tree upward, one the strength required to strain "against the bitter horizontals of / a north wind," the other the tree's own passions, which warp him "to one side / in . . . eagerness."

This passion is elaborated in the poem "Spring Strains," one of Williams' most energetic poems in surface description. If the free verse form fails to exploit the possibility for structural tensions, the imagery compensates by creating one of the most active scenes possible, directed by verbs. In "Struggle of Wings" (CEP, 291-93), a similarly active scene is observed; but there the scene is identified first as two birds protecting a young one "warm and safe between them," and then as "Poesy, born of a man and two women." The victory won

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in this poem is that of clothing poetry in "such drab trash as this" because it exists, actively, in nature and in the imagination. Structurally weak, the poem "Struggle With Wings" is yet interesting thematically.

Thus, as a beginning poet, Williams' primary concern was to identify a source of energy and pursue it to full release. Unpracticed in meter and prosody, he organized his images, conceptual and perceptual, into basically self-contained units. As he wrote to Alva Turner in 1921:

You must know by this time that my liking is for an unimpeded thrust right through a poem from the beginning to the end, without regard to formal arrangements. You seem to get lost in the middle of things, to repeat for the sake of sound. . . .

If only you would forget yourself in a wild burst of composition, building up a structure without any thought but for the development of what you see and feel. . . .

(SL, 50)

Capturing scenes from nature was an obvious place to begin; and when recorded in a form such as in "Dawn," these scenes formed a perfect model of energy pent and released:

Ecstatic bird songs pound
the hollow vastness of the sky
with metallic clinkings--
beating color up into it
at a far edge,--beating it, beating it
with rising, triumphant ardor,--
stirring it into warmth,

quickenin'g in it a spreadin' change,--
 burstin'g wildl'y against it as
 dividin'g the horizon, a heavy sun
 lifts himself--is list'ed--
 bit by bit above the edge
 of things,--runs free at last
 out into the open--! lumberin'g
 glorified in full release upward--
 songs cease.

(CEP, 138)

At other times the impetus was provided by the poet's reaction to his daily tasks, as in his "Complaint" against a house call on a frozen night after midnight, or his "Apology" for being so moved by "The beauty of / the terrible faces / of our nonentities" (CEP, 131). The portraits of these "nonentities" are endless--the murderer's little daughter, the old men, the woman in bed, the young housewife. However often revised, these poems still seemed to have a spontaneous generation.

Williams' later poems show, however, a growing need to generate enthusiasm. "Chicory and Daisy" is a strange admonition to chicory on how to flower for fear the chicory will fail, followed by a brief description of a child tearing the stems of daisies with her teeth to prepare them for weaving into her hair. The first image suggests some failure in nature, followed by an image of human destruction. "To a Solitary Disciple" is more to the point, for it instructs the poet in a method of observation. The persona of this poem warns his lone disciple not to be distracted by the superficial

properties of color and texture. Instead, the poet must learn to see the lines and forms which comprise the real drama among natural objects. He must observe lines which extend objects into their environment and which create larger, composite forms. He must also become aware of counteracting forces which seek to arrest motion. Following the advice of the painters, Williams began to observe the structure of these enlarged scenes.

Throughout the twenties, finding new ways to see was very important to Williams. After the first excitement of fulfilling the demands of his creative energies, he began to concentrate upon breaking out of stereotyped responses, using diction other than overworked poetic language. During this period, Williams was finding dissatisfaction more with predictable responses than with a loss of inspiration. Kora in Hell is an experiment in language and imagination in which Williams attempts a new attitude of mind through a dip into the subconscious. Williams was tired of responses dictated by habit, and sought the energy of a new level of awareness.

The methods of Kora opened new sources for Williams, sources available, perhaps ironically, through relaxation rather than intensification of attention. Because patterns of awareness tend to stabilize on one Plane, one must loosen one's attention from its rigid

orbit in order to waver into other modes of perception. One might then concentrate on those other planes and modes.

It is true that the attempt to form new patterns of perception involved a contempt for old patterns which some critics interpret as primarily destructive. However, Williams does not treat these patterns as fictions to be destroyed in the same way as Wallace Stevens does, nor as truths to be demythologized, as in contemporary theology. Williams admires past cultures for expressing truths in structures appropriate to their age. His interpretation of the present is closer to the spirit of evolution, or of dispensationalism. Since the world has changed, the modern writer must reflect a new age. Although the environment changes, the mind is slow to catch up and must be disciplined into a new mode.

The distinction to be made can be clarified by looking at Williams' treatment of different cultures. British culture is not "wrong" for Britain, but it is not consistent with the conditions of America. Historically or locally, authorities are devised to satisfy contemporary and local conditions. The fault of America especially--but also of all countries--has been to perpetuate an existing authority instead of allowing it to grow out of the local ground. As he says in "The American Background,"

One might go on to develop the point from this that the American addition to world culture will always be the "new," in opposition to an "old" represented by Europe. But that isn't satisfactory. What it is actually is something much deeper: a relation to the immediate conditions of the matter in hand, and a determination to assert them in opposition to all intermediate authority. Deep in the pattern of the newcomers' minds was impressed that conflict between present reliance on the prevalent conditions of place and the over-riding of an unrelated authority.

(SE, 143)

Thus, whereas Wallace Stevens seems to say that man continues to create inadequate fictions in an attempt to express a reality which is basically inaccessible, Williams stresses the need to achieve an adequate expression of an immediate reality which is different from that of any other time or place. Williams seeks no supreme fiction--only a timely one.⁶ His tone is totally sincere, convinced of the present adequacy of an honest expression drawn from contemporary experience. He differs from Stevens primarily by assuming a local immanence rather than a remote transcendence of meaning (see my chapter on Whitehead).

Value for Williams is thus an honest recognition of things for what they really are, not for what we have become accustomed to think of them as, or what someone else tells us they are. It is also the willingness to give each object and event its due--not slighting it through familiarity or arbitrary standards of importance.

Characteristically, over-familiarity with a region will cause one to give only cursory attention to commonplace objects and to routine actions and events. Outlining a program for himself in Kora in Hell, Williams writes:

The true value is that peculiarity which gives an object a character by itself. The associational or sentimental value is the false. Its Imposition is due to lack of imagination, to an easy lateral sliding. The attention has been held too rigid on the one plane instead of following a more flexible, jagged resort. It is to loosen the attention, my attention since I occupy part of the field, that I write these improvisations. . . .

(SE, 11)

The ability to descend from the comfortable plane of ordinary, predictable existence involves a willingness to experience the grotesque as well as the sublime. Williams cites his mother, a mystical person who used to embarrass him at times with her visitations, as a natural example of this mode of perception. By nature, she was "the most lighthearted thing in the world," but he found that she was frequently given over to periods of great depression. There would come a grotesque turn to her talk, "a macabre anecdote concerning some dream, a passionate statement about death, which elevates her mood without marring it, sometimes in a most startling way." For example,

Looking out at our parlor window one day I said to her: "We see all the shows from here, don't we, all the weddings and funerals?" (They had been preparing a funeral across the street, the

undertaker was just putting on his overcoat.) She replied: "Funny profession that, burying the dead people. I should think they wouldn't have any delusions of life left." W.--Oh, yet it's merely a profession. M.--Hm. And how they study it! They say sometimes people look terrible and they come and make them look fine. They push things into their mouths! (Realistic gesture) W.--Mama! M.--Yes, when they haven't any teeth.

By some such dark turn at the end she raises her story out of the commonplace: "Look at that chair, look at it! (The plasterers had just left.) If Mrs. J. or Mrs. D. saw that they would have a fit."

Williams goes on to explain that

Thus, seeing the thing itself without forethought or afterthought but with great intensity of perception, my mother loses her bearings or associates with some disreputable person or translates a dark mood. She is a creature of great imagination. I might say this is her sole remaining quality. . . .

(SE, 5)

For Mrs. Williams, the capacity to become suddenly aware of the concrete value of a commonplace object, such as a chair, was apparently a gift. It was a spontaneous power that liberated her from the background emotions which were preoccupying her. In praising this gift, Williams reveals his almost religious appreciation for things as agents capable of readjusting perspectives and correcting concepts of value. Williams' is a strangely fragmenting aesthetic, apparently reversing the romantic quest to find unity in the world. A. Kingsley Weatherhead claims that the "most significant thing about Williams' Poetry is, I believe, that he worked according to the

fancy and not the imagination as Coleridge used this word."⁷ In Coleridge, "The role of the imagination in the large structure of a work is to modify each part, shaping it so that it contributes to the controlling idea of the whole."⁸ Thus, imagination has the power "by a sort of fusion to force many into one."⁹ However, "In images of fancy the attention is arrested on the image and does not drift into the idea; the object tends to keep its sharp edges unblurred and to remain inviolate in the mind."¹⁰ By relegating Williams' poetic act to the realm of mere fancy, Weatherhead tends to devalue Williams' merit. He concludes that Williams abstracts objects in order to modify reality by a context of rhythm in the earlier poems and a context of new meanings in the later.¹¹ Thus, "as Williams continuously invents and renews his world, he does so, to a great degree, in order to create himself within it and to wonder at the product."¹² Williams, however, was not creating a new world, but rediscovering the true world beneath its veneer of learned responses. He assumed that man's present dilemma is not that of needing to fuse fragments back into unity. Rather, the modern American must free himself from his emotional prejudices and be startled into an awareness of bare reality.

Unlike Mrs. Williams, most people must deliberately set their minds to the task of finding value in

the midst of their ordinary routines. "January Morning" is an excellent illustration of this aesthetic operating within a poem. The poet first analyzes the psychology which causes one to find beauty whenever traveling away from the local: we find beauty because of the unusual schedules which we keep and because of anticipation. If beauty is the reward of our expectations, then one should be able to attain the same sense of beauty in the local by approaching it with an equal attitude of anticipation. This is exactly what the poet sets out to do, and his attempt is singularly successful. Routine occasions, such as going to work, and surrounding scenes assume significance and beauty. This psychology of finding excitement in the local is captured in a beautiful concluding image:

Well, you know how
 the young girls run giggling
 on Park Avenue after dark
 when they ought to be home in bed?
 Well,
 that's the way it is with me somehow.

(CEP, 166)

To open his eyes to the reassuring presence of the common objects of the world is indeed a difficult task for the poet, requiring the disciplined receptivity of Williams' Objectivist period of the twenties and thirties when he tried to become sensitive enough to overcome "the virtual impossibility of lifting to the

imagination those things which lie under the direct scrutiny of the senses, close to the nose" (SE, 11). Such discipline produces the clarity of vision Williams finds in the work of the artist Charles Sheeler--"the bewildering directness of . . . vision, without blur, through the fantastic overlay with which our lives so vastly are concerned, 'the real,' as we say, contrasted with the artist's 'fabrication'" (SE, 231).

Because of his interest in the autonomous object, Nancy Willard links Williams with the poets Neruda, Rilke and Ponge. She reminds us that "To the Ding-poet, all a priori systems of thought make a false unity because they leave out the total richness of the concrete."¹³ He is in distinct contrast to the romantic, whose creativity centers in the power of the imagination to interpret objects and events. The distinction is apparent, she illustrates, in a romantic poet like Wordsworth, who delights in things but primarily in the mind's control. In "Of Poetry as Observation and Description," Wordsworth claims:

The ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by a passion or feeling existing in the mind of the describer . . . though indispensable to a Poet, is one which he employs only in submission to necessity, and never for a continuance of time: as its exercise supposes all the higher qualities of the mind to be passive, and in a state of subjection to external objects.¹⁴

For Williams, the fallacy of Wordsworth's claim is the fact that it places precise description and value in opposition. Wordsworth assumes that the mind displays its power primarily through interpretation. Williams, however, discovers an inherent value in objects--a value not stated, but rather created in the reader's mind.¹⁵ Nature does not proclaim herself as important, but exists as created. Thus, the power of the mind is its ability to participate in nature's creative role. Clarifying the act of imitation, Williams insists,

To copy nature is a spineless activity; it gives us a sense of our mere existence but hardly more than that. But to imitate nature involves the verb: we then ourselves become nature, and so invent an object which is an extension of the process.

(SE, 297)

With such an aesthetic Williams can insist upon the importance of words as innately valuable because they are involved in the created order. He admired Gertrude Stein's effort to smash "every connotation that words have ever had, in order to get them back clean." For, it is "the words, the words we need to get back to, words washed clean. Until we get the power of thought back through a new minting of the words we are actually sunk" (SE, 163). And so he joined Stein and Joyce, Pound and Moore in what he saw as a common attempt to get back to the word as reality. It was an attempt he saw matched by the

painter to use paint as reality--a value of words and paint exceeding semantic and representational value. Williams illustrates his point humorously in the Auto-biography. One day, when Alanson Hartpence was in charge of the Daniel Gallery,

In walked one of their most important customers, a woman in her fifties who was much interested in some picture whose identity I may at one time have known. She liked it, and seemed about to make the purchase, walked away from it, approached it and said, finally, "But Mr. Hartpence, what is all that down in this left hand lower corner?"

Hartpence came up close and carefully inspected the area mentioned. Then, after further consideration, "That, Madam," said he, "is paint."

(A, 240)

Williams' stark images do, however, present a challenge which may cause the reader to feel the poet did not fulfill his total obligation. Williams assumed an appreciation for the total process of nature, of which his creative act is a part. Perhaps in a moment of truth which springs from the flux of experience as spontaneously as the observations of Mrs. Williams, he recorded an image, using diction which is as precise as his vision. He assumed much about the reader's corresponding frame of mind; the burden of the aesthetic experience depends upon the reader's ability to reconstruct the poetic process for himself. Denied an explanation of imitation, the reader may find the denotative organization of words solely an exercise for the esthete. Thus, to clarify

the imitative process, Williams needed to explore the radical nature of structure.

In brief, then, after an initial outpouring of romantic expression, Williams turned first to an energetic nature to motivate his verse. Snatches of conversation and encounters with patients entered poems directly. Frequently, these images and voices found expression in a language so vibrant that Williams did not feel the need for involved structure; he found free verse forms adequate for his purposes. However, he soon recognized a tendency in his emotions to prejudice his vision. Words and images were so easily coated with prior connotations and emotions. Thus, he concentrated upon clarifying his language and imagery, and he committed himself to a strict ethic of objectivity. Also, he began to study structure in order to transfer the burden of energy from that of powerful images alone to the motion of the line itself. His development of a kinetic form defines an emerging ethic of motion.

CHAPTER II

THE ETHIC OF MOTION

In his address, "The Poem as a Field of Action," Williams attempts a scientific interpretation of aesthetics. In seeking to isolate the dynamic level of a poem, he supports the traditional dichotomy of the poem into structure and subject matter. This division is not so contradictory to the theories of the New Critics as it might at first seem; it is compatible with organic form if we understand that Williams is devaluing the potentially diverting, referential meaning of the poem. Speaking at the University of Washington in 1948, Williams was stressing a current need to perfect the poem's structure. As referential meaning, subject matter is the most transient part of the poem, Williams claims. It is "a dream, a day-dream of wish fulfillment," as analyzed by Freud (SE, 281). Mere dream does not place the poem in a field of action, or produce "purposive action of a high order." It is rather the underlying structure that imitates the fundamental processes of life and thereby achieves authenticity:

And let me remind you here to keep in your minds the term reality as contrasted with phantasy and to tell you that the subject matter of the poem is always phantasy--what is wished for, realized in the "dream" of the poem--but that the structure confronts something else.

(SL, 281)

Thus, in his own writing, Williams began to isolate a structure such as he saw in the works of Gertrude Stein-- "the skeleton, the 'formal' parts of writing . . . apart from the 'burden' they carry. The skeleton, important to acknowledge where confusion of all knowledge of the 'soft parts' reigns as at the present day in all intellectual fields" (SE, 115).

Williams did not deny the value of subject matter, but he felt that even as the advances of science are allowing us to penetrate below surface reality to such things as the structure of the atom and the mystery of relativity--so the poet should be seeking the essence of reality in the workings of his verse.¹ To seek energy by merely referring to technological changes through the imagery and arguments of the poem was to him to give in to the pressures of the age and to public taste; " . . . money talks, and . . . the modern poet has admitted new subject matter to his dreams . . . the whole armamentarium of the industrial age . . . " (SL, 282). Rather, the energy for a poem should arise from a feeling of rhythm or from a sense of relationships and should thus exceed

the objects perceived. The poem embodies rather than discusses its forces. Retrospectively, we can see Williams' intuitive thrust toward a theory Charles Olson was later to articulate. According to Olson's theory of projective verse,

every element in an open poem (the syllable, the line, as well as the image, the sound, the sense) must be taken up as participants in the kinetic of the poem just as solidly as we are accustomed to take what we call the objects of reality; and that these elements are to be seen as creating the tensions of a poem just as totally as do those other objects create what we know as the world.²

Beginning with J. Hillis Miller's 1963 study, criticism has typically agreed that Williams experiences little concern with the Cartesian duality (see my Chapter III). When the motive of a poem shifts from that of bridging this duality, the poet rediscovers primitive urges and exposes himself to the energies of nature and of psychic drives. He discovers in objects sources of power and forces to be organized into a poetic field of action. The more directly he enters into the very process of nature, the more he begins to organize his verse to imitate the interacting forces he perceives in biology, chemistry and physics. If Williams' verse seems loose at times because it lacks the traditional tensions of paradox, irony and wit, it is because he assumes the new physics in his poetic organization.

Williams was the intuitive explorer of poetry's new field of action.

In keeping with his preference for locating energy in poetic structure rather than in referential meaning, Williams very seldom describes technology and its power. Those mechanical images he does use reveal his attitude toward technological power. In "Classic Scene," he gives a rare description of a power house such as Charles Demuth might draw. Yet, even this scene is humanized, for in the " . . . red brick chair / 90 feet high . . . sit the figures / of two metal / stacks" dominating the landscape, one active and the other "passive today" (CEP, 407). A few references are made to trains, as in "Period Piece" (CLP, 264) and "East Cocoo" (CLP, 259). The first is a brief incident using dialogue, primarily reflecting the times. The second contains a thematic worry about the threat of the bomb, a dread far more overpowering than the labor of the "innocent locomotive," despite the energy the engine requires to climb the grade. The picture given as the train "streams its cloud of smoke / above the fallen snow" makes ominous the immediate turn of attention to the "coming blast of bombs." Whereas the threat of nuclear power is dealt with by elaborating an image in this poem, "Song" contrasts a pastoral scene with an ironic verbal aside. "Pluck the florets from / a clover head / and

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suck the honey, sweet," it begins. "The world / will
realign itself," it confidently continues,

. . .--ex-
cluding Russia
and the U.S.A. and planes
run soon
by atomic power defying
gravity.

(CLP, 208)

After this aside, the poem returns to the now empty
opening invitation. This fear of atomic power is evi-
denced further in The Desert Music and Journey to Love.
Only by associating the bomb with flowers, imagination
and love can Williams overcome his fear in "Asphodel,
That Greeny Flower."

As a poet of the local, Williams needed to refer
occasionally to scenes influenced by technology, but he
was obviously preoccupied with people, plant life, and
commonplace objects. In fact, he typically responded to
machinery with distrust. There seems to be a fear of
science as a sterile, uninventive method--as a mechanical
process. The power of the machine is at least unbeautiful,
as in the image,

. . the ugly legs of the young girls,
pistons too powerful for delicacy!

(P, 44; see also CEP, 7)³

In 1933, when he wrote to Kenneth Burke regarding his
search for poetic factors still missing, he located these

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elements in his head "as circus performers, net makers-- anything but machines." The distinction, he claimed, was between the embodied knowledge of poetry, and the body of knowledge classified as science or philosophy:

From knowledge possessed by a man springs poetry.
From science springs the machine. But from a man
partially informed, that is, not yet an artist,
springs now science, a detached mass of pseudo-
knowledge, now philosophy, frightened acts of
half realization. Poetry, however, is the
flower of action and presents a different kind
of knowledge from that of S. and P.

(SL, 137)

Thus, he criticized the incomplete poet for using first the mechanism of science and then the desperation of philosophy, both of which are fragmentary and partial because they fall short of the flower of human experience. Even as late as 1954 Williams was criticizing the presumptuousness of a self-satisfied science:

Shame on our poets,
they have caught the prevalent fever:
impressed by the "laboratory,"
they have forgot
the flower!
which goes beyond all
laboratories!
They have quit the job
of invention. The
imagination has fallen asleep
in a poppy-cup.

(PB, 96)

Because of his criticism of science and mechanization, it is ironic that the most apt definition Williams

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ever gave for a poem is in terms of a machine. The analogy that he made in his 1944 introduction to The Wedge shows that Williams could at times reconcile science and poetry. In a striking image, he suggests:

To make two bald statements: There's nothing sentimental about a machine, and: A poem is a small (or large) machine made of words. When I say there's nothing sentimental about a poem I mean that there can be no part, as in any other machine, that is redundant.

(SE, 256)

According to this definition, the primary concern of poetry is efficient action. Because a literary definition of sentimentalism is emotion in excess of the occasion, to be sentimental is to include parts which are not called for--to be redundant. A poem requires the same careful design as does a modern machine.

Williams also expresses the function of the poem in terms of energy: "Prose may carry a load of ill-defined matter like a ship. But poetry is the machine which drives it, pruned to a perfect economy." Poetry, then, is charged highly enough to propel the total cargo. Preceding the publication of Paterson by two years, this description anticipates that poem's mixture of prose and poetry and defines the distinction as a measure of energy and power rather than as a difference of subject matter or form. To Williams, the poetic imagination is power. As

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Rod Townley notes, it is a power already evident in Kora and Spring and All, where

No matter how impassioned, lyrical, rhythmical the prose, its voice is different from that of the poetry, and the moment of transition, when the assertive intellect yields to the imagination, is as magical as the analogous moment in a symphony when the tempo suddenly shifts and all the instruments get out of the way before the entrance of an unaccompanied violin.⁴

A very important part of the machine definition involves the source of its parts:

As in all machines its movement is intrinsic, undulant, a physical more than a literary character. In a poem this movement is distinguished in each case by the character of the speech from which it arises.

Therefore, each speech having its own character, the poetry it engenders will be peculiar to that speech also in its own intrinsic form.

Referentially, Williams insists that the voice of a poem must echo the voices of its local. Oral forces flow into the poem. Internally, these voices determine the character of an individual poem.

The most important part of Williams' analogy is stated last. "The effect," he declares,

is beauty, what in a single object resolves our complex feelings of propriety. One doesn't seek beauty. All that an artist . . . can do is to drive toward his purpose, in the nature of his material.

Translated into mechanical terms, this claim suggests that beauty is the product of the machine, not the machine

itself. T

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itself. This ultimate beauty, which both poet and reader seek, cannot be sought in the tangible parts of the poem, but results only as the poet and reader engage themselves in the workings of the verse. One cannot demonstrate beauty scientifically, but rather realizes beauty as the end result of the poem. Beauty is the process of reading or composing; it exists in the space between the poet or reader and his materials. This space is the locus of the elusive, beautiful thing in Book Three of Paterson; because the space is defined only in the process of searching, Paterson requires a methodical "Rigor of beauty."

The salvation of Williams' emphasis upon method is his conviction that the method serves human needs. In 1954 Williams stressed his belief that "before I extol too much and advocate the experimental method, let me emphasize that, like God's creation, the objective is not experimentation but man. In our case, poems!" (SE, 291). For him, poetry was not simply play by the creator, but the creation of an object as valuable to man as man is to God. Thus, it becomes increasingly clear that Williams admired science and technology to the extent that they serve man by revealing the dynamic structure of the universe or harnessing various sources of energy; he feared science to the extent that it presented the threat of the bomb or initiated an automatic, insensitive process. The

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poems in which Williams deals with the technological issue most effectively are those which assume an interpenetration of natural and mechanical processes. A rare example of this is the poet's perception of clouds as freight cars in an entry in the 1928 collection, The Descent of Winter:

To freight cars in the air
 all the slow
 clank, clank
 clank, clank
 moving above the treetops

 the
 wha, wha
 of the hoarse whistle

 pah, pah, pah
 pah, pah, pah, pah, pah
 piece and piece
 piece and piece
 moving still trippingly
 through the morningmist

 long after the engine
 has fought by
 and disappeared
 in silence
 to the left
 (CEP, 303)

The tone of this poem is affirmative, supportive of the train image as an appropriate analogy for the external scene, even to the whistling of the wind. The organic form of the middle section is especially effective, both rhythmically and visually. The most powerful section of the poem is the ending, however, after the noise of the

"engine" has past, leaving the persona in the silence of the continuing motion. Varying its rhythm throughout, the poem subsides into a quiet, hypnotic motion conducive to dreaming or even to a mystical experience.

In direct contrast to this poem is the satiric "Note to Music: Brahms 1st Piano Concerto" (CLP, 111). The poet resents the machinery of a predetermined pattern of music, perhaps played on a player piano or a phonograph; and he finds that the music "is lost, / survives, is rekindled only / ad interim, pending a willed / refusal." The unacceptable nature of this piano piece is its dissonance with the speaker's feelings. There is no reciprocity between listener and music, and so the music becomes a type of offensive rhetoric, forcing its audience against their wills. This dissonance is presented in the second stanza in vivid terms:

We falter to assurance in despair
hearing the piano pant to
the horns' uncertain blow that
octaves sidelong from the deafened
windows crescendo, rallentando,
diminuendo in wave-like dogmas
we no longer will . . .

In the first stanza, the poet cites the Demuths, Sheelers and Hartleys, "green and grey," as examples of those who might protest an arbitrary music and seek to counteract it with their own humanity. In conclusion, he relates this music to his own concern with poetic form, and he ridicules a parallel poetic dissonance:

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. . . Let us sob
and sonnet our dreams, breathing
upon our nails before the savage
snow . . .

Machinery is destructive, then, when it drives us against our wills; it is helpful when it facilitates our needs. The distinction of function rests upon the harmony between the machine, the environment and the agent engaged in its operation.

When biological life functions smoothly and efficiently, comparisons with machinery are apt. In "The Horse," the determined and disciplined energy of the horse is similar to that of a car, especially in terms of its detachment, for

The horse moves
independently
without reference
to his load

Far from being merely mechanical, the horse displays a maturity which allows him to perform his tasks pragmatically and efficiently. The horse as machine is a positive image, for mechanical efficiency is a function of the horse's will, and he assists rather than exploits the environment. He blends female sympathy with masculine force:

He has eyes
like a woman and
turns them
about, throws

back his ears
and is generally
conscious of
the world. Yet

he pulls when
he must and
pulls well, blowing
fog from

his nostrils
like fumes from
the twin
exhaust of a car.

(CLP, 89)

So defined, the horse contrasts with Hamilton and the S.U.M. in Paterson, for Hamilton's plan exploited the local resources, went against nature with usury, and drove the people without gaining their will.

In another fusion of the mechanical with the biological, Williams correlates breathing with technological power. In "The Injury," a man muses that

From this hospital bed
I can hear an engine
breathing--somewhere
in the night:

--Soft coal, soft coal
soft coal!

As he lies disabled, the persona links the breathing of the engine with the breathing of men feeding the engine:

And I know it is men
breathing
shoveling, resting--

The next section subtly identifies his own breathing as a "slow way" to create enough energy to sustain his small life:

--Go about it
the slow way, if you can
find any way--
Christ!
who's a bastard?
--quit
and quit shoveling.

A man breathing
and it quiets and
the puff of steady
word begins
slowly: Chug.
Chug. Chug. Chug.
Fading off.
Enough coal at least
for this small job
Soft! Soft!
--enough for one small
engine, enough for that.

The injured man is not capable of sustaining the identification for long, however, and so he concentrates on his isolation from the distant work because he lies powerless:

A man shoveling
working and not lying here
in this
hospital bed--powerless
--with the white-throat
calling in the
poplars before dawn, his
faint flute-call,
triple tongued, piercing
the shingled curtain
of the new leaves;
drowned out by
car wheels
singing now on the rails,
taking the curve,

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forces

slowly,
 a long wall,
 high pitched:
 rounding
 the curve--

Only as he returns to the slowed motion of the train as it rounds the curve is he brought back to the possibility of sustaining life through a similar slow but determined output of energy:

--the slow way because
 (if you can find any way) that is
 the only way left now
 for you.

(CLP, 243)

These few examples of mechanical images typically predate Paterson and are the primary examples of Williams' investigation into the relationship between mechanical and natural power. Thematically, each reveals a fascination with motion, with the single requirement that one's will be involved in the action. Williams creates a more ambivalent fusion of the mechanical and natural in the central imagery of Paterson. Joel Conarroe warns us that "The basic idea, 'the city/the man, an identity,' is a conceit that can be apprehended intuitively, but that does not lend itself to concrete development."⁵ Benjamin Sankey is more explicit in identifying the specific forces at work. He notes that

The idea of a sleeping giant, animating the people of the area, expresses Williams's notion that a poet must "give life" to his people if they are truly to live. It also describes the relationship between individuals and the permanent elemental forces active, though unrecognized, in their lives. (These forces are the powers of earth, acting through the place, and through persistent psychological energies of sexual love and religious awe; Book Two presents poor modern "replicas" of them.)⁶

Thus, however involved the metaphor, the image of Paterson portrays a mingling of primordial, psychic and industrial energies which circulate in a complex of natural and mechanical motions. The spent waters of the river outline the back of the giant, whose head is near the thunder of the active falls, whose descent parallels the flow of the various thoughts of the poem. The noise of the falls somehow provides the substance for the giant's breathing, which in turn animates the automatons who reside in the city. Furthermore, the giant's animating breath is described as his "machinations"--suggesting a reliance upon the language of technology to increase the potential of natural power. Thus, the elemental Paterson is also a technological giant, and the modern city has access to a power consonant with its needs if contact can only be made with primordial sources. Formally, Cary Nelson reminds us, "The falls are a symbol where energy is localized . . . [and] This imagery generates the poem . . . ; Paterson is consequently filled with hesitant

poised motion, imminent action, precipitous form at the brink of the falls. . . .⁷

The mechanization of psychic energy may not be entirely healthy, however. As personified dreams, the characters are unaware of their "sources [and] the sills of their disappointments" (P, 6). If they represent Freudian desires in Paterson, their animation is another example of power divorced from will. The modern psychologist would say that Paterson is not in touch with his true self, but only with the power of subconscious drives. On this level, animation resembles sleepwalking; and the need to be aroused is the need to achieve self-awareness. Sankey cites a note from the Yale manuscripts that indicates that perhaps as early as 1941, Williams saw the need for Paterson to "Waken from a dream, this dream of / the whole poem" (P, 200), as the poet admonishes near the end of Book IV.⁸ Sankey also claims that in this event, both the giant and Williams himself are aroused. Thus, as Conarroe notes, the descent of Book Two is indeed a descent "into the unconscious, into the past, with its places formerly unsuspected, and its realization of a new awakening."⁹

However, if as participants in the "dream of the whole poem" the automatons represent the fleeting subject matter which Williams identifies in his 1954 address, the disruption of their sleep recommends a transition

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from the phantasy of desire to the deeper reality of structure. For if "the subject matter of the poem is always phantasy--what is wished for, realized in the 'dream' of the poem," to awaken from that dream may be the act of discovering that "structure [which] confronts something else." The awakening may therefore be the transition Pearson notes whereby the poet enters his poetic universe directly in Book Five¹⁰--a universe in which energy creates structure, and measure prevails. Thus, once again quoting Nelson:

As a nexus of verbal energy, the falls have a special role in the structure of the poem. Their open-ended power to accrete shapes, gestures, signs and images creates an expanding associative context for the poem's action. All movement in Paterson takes place as part of this collage or cluster; reading invests the associative nexus with intimacy and participates in the formal leap of the falls. In the context of the falls, perception becomes a situational human geometry, a free flow of form rooted absolutely to an object. The leap and fall is from the words to the page; it is an action--our inhabitation of suffused-encircling space. Paterson forces the reader's participation in the poem.

A meta-verbal form is created by words, space and reading. Williams calls poetry of this space a "field of action."¹¹

Thus, in Paterson one can see Williams' emerging emphasis upon structure as the locus of action.

ii

The essential structure of a Williams poem may follow one of three forms of motion. First, the poem may embody the design of its figure as it presents itself

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to the perception of poet and reader. The more the poet records the action of the persona's mind, the more the rhythms will change to a structure which resembles the motion of thought and will become the structure of contemplation. These two varieties of structure are both organic form; one imitates the form of its object, while the other follows the advances and hesitations of the person's stream of consciousness. The third structure creates a tension between reality and formal design.

"Sparrow Among Dry Leaves" illustrates the two varieties of organic form. In the opening stanzas, the rhythm of the verse is consistent with that of the yet inactive sparrows, but it is closer to the inertia of the mind in slow meditation:

The sparrows
by the iron fence-post
hardly seen

for the dry leaves
that half
cover them--

Throughout this section, falling rhythms and spondees slow the rhythm. Diction also clogs the motion through long vowels combined with liquid consonants, punctuated with plosives. Each line forms an uninterrupted thought unit: subject, prepositional phrase, adverb and verb, prepositional phrase, adjectival clause. With the introduction of "half / covered," however, the line

begins to a
changes as

Now verbs
and the ad
split in h
embodiment
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stagger w
smooth tr
finally a

Thus, the
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is a ment
the proce
from imag
a natural

begins to assume the motion of the object, and the prosody changes as contemplation becomes direct perception:

stirring up
the leaves--fight
and chirp

stridently
search
and

peck the sharp
gravel to
good digestion

Now verbs are separated from their objects and adverbs, and the adjective from its noun; even the infinitive is split in half. In meter and prosody, form seems a perfect embodiment of each action. These three stanzas are highly charged, loaded with verbs which either move rapidly or stagger with an excess of contained energy. Then, in a smooth transition, the poem returns to contemplation, finally arrested in an application:

and love's
obscure and insatiable
appetite

(CEP, 485)

Thus, the mind is activated, engaged in the motion of a perception, and charged with an energy which it releases in a mental observation. Unlike Williams' early aesthetic, the process of release arises from structure as well as from imagery in this poem. Throughout, the verse form is a natural outgrowth of the action of either mind or object.

Whereas the energy for perception or contemplation comes from the motion of the object or mind, the energy for the formal approach emerges from the tension between content and form. Organic form derives solely from content. The formal approach fractures natural designs in order to draw attention to itself and thus to the poet's control of his materials. As Alan Ostrom says,

. . . the poem must make something uncommon of the common, it must formalize that inherently amorphous mass, must purify it by measuring it, must impose upon the freedom--even irresponsibility--of speech a structure that will reproduce the poet's understanding of the rhythm, the measured pattern, of the life of his world. This is, for Williams, the poem's prime need.¹²

Traditional poetic forms supplied ready models within which the poet could devise variations to create tensions and surprises. Although Williams constantly criticized these forms, especially the sonnet and the quatrain using iambic pentameter, he could not escape the need for some container for verse. Whitman had done well to free us from the tyranny of traditional forms, but "Whitman was never able fully to realize the significance of his structural innovations": "Verse is measure, there is no free verse" (SE, 212).

Because he resented arbitrary orders, Williams searched desperately for a found order within which to restrain the looser rhythms of normal speech and perception. He admired Hopkins' sprung rhythms, but he

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rejected both the contorting tendency and the original, arbitrary form against which Hopkins forced his verse. Williams also rejected Cummings' games with language, as evidenced in Book V of Paterson (pp. 224-25), preferring a language drawn from actual speech. Thus, when he was not using organic form, Williams turned to science and to instinct to construct a formal design.

According to Romantic theories, the function of the Imagination was to mediate between the data of sense and the forms of understanding. Kant decided that formal patterns cannot be derived from phenomena itself but are part of an a priori system of the mind. Williams apparently disagrees with Kantian philosophy and believes that aesthetic form can arise directly from nature's dynamic form. In a 1955 letter to John Thirlwall, he suggests that if it were merely an aesthetic matter of preference, one could not choose between the perfection of a Homeric line and a stanza from one of Villon's ballads. Each technique must be judged in its own category, according to its own standard of perfection. "But," he goes on to say, "when availability for human expression is broached, the structure of the poetic line itself enters the field. That is where aesthetics is mated with physics, to broaden the view" (SL, 330). The concept of physics which Williams selects is that of measurement, which arises from the theory of relativity:

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The first thing you learn when you begin to learn anything about this earth is that you are eternally barred save for the report of your senses from knowing anything about it. Measure serves for us as the key: we can measure between objects; therefore, we know that they exist. Poetry began with measure, it began with the dance, whose division we have all but forgotten but are still known as measures. Measure they were and we still speak of their minute elements as feet.

(SL, 330-31)

The beauty of such a measure is the way in which it allows a degree of escape at the same time that it keeps one in the bounds of existence. "The mind always tries to break out of confinement," Williams admits, even considering flight to the moon. "But the only thing which will finally interest it must be its own intrinsic nature" (SL, 330).

Changing images, Williams also claims that he has experienced a musical beat which belongs specifically to the present age. "It began for me," he says,

. . . as it must always do on the purely physical plane; I was at the same time, besides being the product of a new country, a child of a new era in the world, the era which was to discover among other things the relativity of all knowledge. But the world about me still clung to the old measurements.

I know instinctively that it was wrong. My ears were keen; I sensed it first through my ears, even as a babe in arms. My uncle, who was a musician, noticed it and spoke of it to my mother: Listen! he said and began to beat a drum. At a certain point in the rhythm he would stop sharply and I, to complete the beat would come in with my, tum tum. I did not have the subtlety of the best Negro drummers, but something fundamental had taken place in me of which I know nothing.

(SL, 328-29)

Thus, Williams concludes that although

It may seem presumptive to state that such an apparent minor activity as a movement in verse construction could be an indication of Einstein's discoveries in the relativity of our measurements of physical matter . . . such is the fact.

(SL, 332)

Hence, Williams claims that his early discovery offers hope for society as well as for himself:

. . . I was early convinced that I had in the compass of my head a great discovery that if I could only get it out would not only settle my own internal conflicts but be of transcendent use to the men and women around me. That it concerned something as evanescent as language I did not for a moment guess.

(SE, 329)

The concept of relativity suggests a spatial and temporal organization for poetry, somehow consistent with the design of the universe, while the musical beat toward which jazz was moving suggests a rhythm. This theory of a formal structure grounded in the natural world offers infinite appeal, but it is also practically impossible to demonstrate. A formal model more accessible to analysis follows the movement of the mind as it pays attention to its world. Outlining this notion in a 1920's essay on Gertrude Stein, Williams seems to seek a compromise between decisive and aimless motion. First, he implies that the search for truth and beauty is basically a motion. Hence, logic is one form of motion, although a

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"petty" one. "But movement must not be confused with what we attach to it but, for the rescuing of the intelligence, must always be considered aimless, without progress" (I, 348). Either definition, the logical sequence or the aimless transition, is inadequate, Williams claims, to describe "the mind in fullest play." Rather, the mind progresses through a motion which places two forces in tension:

It is an alertness not to let go of a possibility of movement in our fearful bedazzlement with some concrete and fixed present. The goal is to keep a beleaguered line of understanding which has movement from breaking down and becoming a hole into which we sink decoratively to rest.

(I, 348-49)

Thus, the mind alternates between purposeful pursuit and an aimless openness to the possibilities of the moment.¹³ Translated into a form, the individual lines of a Williams poem arrest one's attention with their details and create a tension against the kinetic action which forces the poem to its completion. Individual sections may also have minor tensions between varying paces of language flow. Thus, whereas traditional verse is contained within standardized forms against which it constantly struggles, Williams' verse opens the field up to the line in conflict with the larger form of the poem, or to conflicting qualities of language.

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Returning to Williams' dichotomy of the poem into content and form, we find that both elements function in this tension. In terms of subject matter, logic may drive the poem forward, overcoming the inertia of the lines with its growing momentum. Yet, Williams does not consider logic to be that primary motivating force, which "moves as the sense wearies, remains fresh, living. One is concerned with it as with anything pursued and not with the rush of air or the guts of the horse one is riding--save to a very minor degree" (I, 349). Like a form of curiosity, this desire for truth, beauty and completion drives the poet and the reader through the poem.

Such an experience is apparent in the poem, "In the 'Sconset Bus." The choice of form is not organic in this poem, for narrow couplets varying in length from one to five syllables do not reveal any resemblances to the chosen objects or ideas. Yet, the almost stingy release of information, bit by bit, encourages an inquisitive attitude on the part of the reader. One reads on, drawn by a need to discover the truth of the experience. This truth is one of detail rather than message. In fact, the one interpretive line (naming the dog "Youth") is probably the least successful part of the poem. Rather, it is in presenting the experience with such care that the poet convinces us of its value and authenticity:

Upon the fallen
cheek

a gauzy down--
And on

the nape
--indecently

a mat
of yellow hair

stuck with
celluloid

pins
not quite

matching it
--that's

two shades
darker

at the roots
Hanging

from the ears
the hooks

piercing the
flesh--

gold and semi-
precious

stones--
And in her

lap the dog
(Youth)

resting
his head on

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pants restlessly
backward

(CEP, 338-39)

In addition to the quest for revelation, the downward thrust of the poetic form, the lack of commas or periods, and the enjambment intensified by semantic division carry the reader forward. Pauses occur after each of the four major observations--that of cheek, hair, earrings and dog. Secondary pauses occur after the second, fifth, thirteenth, nineteenth, twenty-second, twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth, thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth lines, as perceptions are divided. Minor pauses occur at the end of each line and after each couplet. Thus, the poem demonstrates a tension of stasis and motion set off more from curiosity than from logic.

According to Alan Ostrom, a poem's struggle between content and form produces a definite form of energy. In an intelligent discussion of a poem constructed from single-word lines ("The Locust Tree in Flower") Ostrom suggests:

The conflict between this expansive tendency of words and the restrictive nature of the poem's structure, here in the maximum possible opposition, creates the underlying energy and excitement that is the initial emotional charge in the poem. For whatever else one may hold in his esthetic, he cannot escape the fact that in any poem the primary pleasure is born of the audience's

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immediate realization of the poem's artifice and their appreciation, first, of the difficulty of making the artifice contain a life of its own; second, of using materials (words) not created especially and specifically for the artifice (or artifact); and finally, of the poem's maintaining a conflict between art and nature in which both are heightened and supported by each other and neither is victorious at the other's expense.¹⁴

If at times Williams stresses the shape and formal motion more than his subject content, it is partly because of the emphasis of craft, partly because of the complexity of available content. "How," Williams asks, " . . . can writing . . . remain in the field . . . [when] observation about us engenders the opposite of what we seek: triviality, crassness and intellectual bankruptcy" (I, 349). It is at these times that in order to reject satire and yet be local "in the sense of being attached with integrity to actual experience," one must "for subtlety ascend to a plane of almost abstract design to keep alive" (I, 349). Such a concept of the power of the imagination to move past the arresting confines of given details is echoed in Paterson V. There, death, the ultimate arrest, is seen first as a hole in which we are buried--a pit which makes concrete the idea of stasis. The metaphor changes, then, on the sense of the word hole, which becomes a hole (opening)

in the bottom of the bag.

It is the imagination
which cannot be fathomed.

thus,

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It is through this hole
we escape . .

Thus,

Through this hole
at the bottom of the cavern
of death, the imagination
escapes intact.

(P, 212)

Life continues, then, as long as one keeps in motion--a motion made possible through the action of the poem, energized by the mind.

The antithesis of motion is captivity, dormancy. In two poems Williams describes ironically the results of inactivity. The first poem, "The Bull," has received a fair amount of attention. It opens with a blatant contradiction which almost slips by unnoticed because of the smoothness of the rhetoric, for lack of free will is not an attribute of most gods:

It is in captivity--
ringed, haltered, chained
to a drag
the bull is godlike

(CEP, 336)

While claiming the majesty of isolation, the poem proceeds to enumerate the actions of this deity: he nozzles the grass gingerly (nothing is said about eating), apparently because he has nothing else to do; kneels, lies down, stretches, licks himself, dozes--"Olympian

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commentary on / the bright passage of days." He and his setting are both apparently sealed off with lacquer and gloss, hardened into a surface which the wind can superficially play about but not influence. Isolated and inactive, the bull is thus nonproductive--a porcelain god whose nod suggests an unquestioning affirmation of his condition and circumstances. Contrasting with the insistence upon combed hair in Paterson, the description of the bull's hair betrays the untouched quality of his appearance and thus his undeveloped nature:

the hair between his horns
and eyes matted
with hyacinthine curls

(CEP, 337)

Certainly the bull is a fake deity, if not an impotent one; but indeed he is the object a sleeping generation might worship--a "wonder" to be observed.

The criticism inherent in "The Bull" seems to be evenly divided between the bull himself for being so passive and the observer for worshipping him. The poem "Perfection" clearly indites mankind for carelessly slighting the objects of his world and allowing them to rot from negligence. The tone of the poem is something of the mock heroic, using apostrophe and hyperbole. On one level, the poem can be enjoyed as an amusing improvisation. The opening stanza is jaunty--

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aside,

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O lovely apple!
 beautifully and completely
 rotten,
 hardly a contour marred--

and the next intensifies the tone with a condescending
 aside, followed with a mocking compliment:

perhaps a little
 shrivelled at the top but that
 aside perfect
 in every detail! O lovely

apple! what a
 deep and suffusing brown
 mantles that
 unspoiled surface! . . .

The conclusion, however, modulates into a contemplation
 which lingers in the mind and invites elaboration:

. . . No one
 has moved you
 since I placed you on the porch
 rail a month ago
 to ripen.

No one. No one!

(CLP, 40)

On this humorously elegaic note, Williams passes judgment
 against the triumph of stasis over motion.

In summary, then, a poem for Williams is a
 little machine which transfers energy. Sometimes the
 statements of the poem discuss energy or motion, but
 the poet seeks the deeper energy of structure. When
 that structure is organic, the reader is conducted
 through a configuration which is a paradigm of a perceived

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event or of a mental action. Sometimes, however, the structure is formal, identifying the poet as an artificer, even though he bases his forms upon patterns derived from physics and music. Whether formal or organic, the poem functions to capture the motion of life in an effort both to demonstrate the vitality of poetry and to activate the reader: Williams' aesthetic assumes an ethic of motion.

If we turn to science for a description of energy, we find that heat, light and work are its products and by-products. As work, it is defined as a force moving a mass through space over a length of time. So defined, energy suggests poetry's triumph of motion over stasis, or the metric figure. Chemical reactions or friction produce energy in the form of heat and light; perhaps these are roughly equivalent to the illusive beauty which results from poetry. Finally, energy can be associated with material body (transferred by means of mechanical interaction between particles) or can be independent of matter (as with light or other electromagnetic radiation traversing a vacuum). Even so, the locus of energy, beauty and the imagination can sometimes be traced directly to the materials of the verse, while at other times it seems to float among those "extraordinary recesses of the understanding" which transcend the tools of science and philosophy, of logic and explanation. Whatever its source, poetry functions to set

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the mind in motion not only through the vibrancy of its surface imagery but also through the dynamics of its structure.

iii

Williams' structure of contemplation requires a special awareness of mental activity. The motion of mind cannot be locked inside one's head, for "how will you find beauty when it is locked in the mind past all remonstrance?" (P, 3). Instead, the poet must discover a way to observe his own mind in action.

The poems of The Collected Later Poems experiment with a verse which can include a visible mind. The poetry of this collection is especially uneven since Williams is caught up in the modernist tendency to write reflexively about writing. Because Williams is so particularly self-conscious, too many of these poems succeed primarily in discussing rather than demonstrating their goals. Hence, The Collected Later Poems contains some of the most revealing statements about Williams' aesthetic even as it includes some of his least effective works of art. Yet, the poems do attempt to record the mind's dynamic action, as the titles "The Mind's Game" and "The Mind Hesitant" suggest. More significant are those poems which attempt a dynamic between mind and object, and also experiment with verse form. The poem "Russia" illustrates these qualities (CLP, 93-96).

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The first three sections of "Russia" present a fairly objective scene, the Williams Avenue Zionist Church. We learn that it is a colored church, that it has a dwarf campanile of blue cinder-blocks, "badly aligned," and that it boasts a white cross. The word improvised helps to characterize the resourcefulness of the congregation, while the need to secure lumber from an old barrel top is justified in the current "lumber shortage"--a comment upon the economy and environment. Only two subjective statements are made. The first fore-shadows the apostrophe to Russia by identifying the church as "a thing to hold in the palm of the hand, / your big hand--". The second is an affirmation of the motives of the builders of the church, who were straight in their incentives if not in their craftsmanship.

The melody of this opening section is varied and syncopated, appropriate both for its formal design and for the flow of the images and thoughts. There is one refrain; and although there is not the symmetry of the triadic line, there is a type of variable foot in which the line slows and pauses as it becomes shorter:

The Williams Avenue Zionist Church
(colored)
a thing to hold in the palm of the hand,
your big hand--
the dwarf campanile piled up, improvised
of blue cinder-blocks, badly aligned
(except for the incentive)
unvarnished,

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the cross at the top slapped together
 (in this lumber shortage) of sticks from
 an old barrel top, I think

--painted white

The poet next addresses Russia as "idiot of the world, blind idiot" and asks, "do you understand me?" Fulfilling the opening image, he places the description and the question in Russia's hands. Thus far, the significance of the poem is totally implicit, as in Williams' earlier objective verse; images show the resourcefulness and independence of a sincere people living during trying times, building their structures out of available materials according to their interests and needs.

The poet goes on, however, to clarify and to identify himself with similar dreams. As he concentrates upon the dream of the poem, this time the structure of the poem does not suffer but captures the rhythms of the dream:

I dream! and my dream is folly. While
 armies rush to the encounter
 I, alone, dream before the impending
 onslaught. And the power in me,
 to be crushed out: this paper, forgotten
 --not even known ever to have existed,
 proclaims the power of my dream . . .

Folly! I call upon folly to save us--
 and scandal and disapproval, the restless
 angels of the mind--

(I omit
 the silly word exile. For from what and
 to what land shall I be exiled and talk of
 the cardinal bird and the starling
 as though they were strange?)

The poem
speech,
of the
formerly
inviolable
mystical
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Referring
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I am
 at home in my dream, Russia; and only there,
 before the obliterating blow
 that shall flatten everything
 and its crazy masonry,

am I at home.

The poem continues with the same power of impassioned speech, developing the dream of the poem as the residence of the poet. He links this dream with the promise Russia formerly inspired, when "the world lived in you / inviolate;" and then he invites Russia into a universal, mystical dream. The possibility of uniting in such a dream is shattered, however, by the irony of the invitation to loaf "a moment / at the edge of destruction."

Unfortunately, as the poem moves into a confessional section, its energy lags. Even though the looseness of the verse is perhaps appropriate to the floundering of the persona, it breaks down into an overdependence upon the technique of splitting units of thoughts at the end of each line. As such, it bounces along with an undue lameness. Yet, the analogy of the closing three stanzas suggests a solution to both social and poetic problems. Referring to a small print he saw that day of Leonardo's Last Supper, the poet distinguishes between the subject matter in the foreground and the "severity and simplicity" of the background:

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Oh there was
 the passion of the scene, of course,
 generally. But particularly,
 ignoring the subject, I fell upon
 the perpendiculars of the paneled
 woodwork standing there, submissive,
 in exaggerated perspective.

There you have it. It's that background
 from which my dreams have sprung. These
 I dedicate now to you, now when I am
 about to die. I hold back nothing. I lay
 my spirit at your feet and say to you:
 Here I am, a dreamer. I do not
 resist you. Among many others, undistinguished,
 of no moment--I am the background
 upon which you will build your empire.

This poem introduces a new component into
 Williams' aesthetic. Not only does Williams distinguish
 between the subject matter (or dream) of a work of art
 and its background structure, but he also identifies an
 intermediate zone. In the images of the poem, the back-
 ground to which he refers is both a part of the painting's
 organization and of its subject matter (or referential
 meaning). It seems as though Williams is seeking to
 identify a new dimension which is both subject and
 structure--a stage above mere composition, and yet more
 structural than is the referential meaning. He keeps
 reaching toward a motion or process which will solve
 the dream of the poem indirectly through the action of
 the poem, and yet will achieve a definite substance or
 presence. I will refer to this elusive level as the sub-
 stantial structure.

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Williams builds many of the poems of The Collected Later Poems upon this trinity of subject matter, structure, and substantial structure, with an emphasis also upon the resulting motion or pace of the poem.

"When Structure Fails Rhyme Attempts to Come to the Rescue" (CLP, 79) is an amusing parody which illustrates Williams' combination of these components. The second of the poem's stanzas claims that the title horse moves so that "the pace that his / mind keeps is the pace / of his dreams." The third and fourth stanzas then identify another kind of pace:

. . . but the pace that
his flesh keeps--

leaning, leaning upon
the bars--beggars
by far all pace and every
refuge of his dreams.

Hence, the poem like the horse has a physical presence or flesh which sets a pace superior to that of all else.

Like the old horse, the poet relies upon rhyme as a rescue when the structure of his poem fails. In prophesying the horse's death, the poet anticipates his own eventual achievement of a structure superior to rhyme.

"The Horse" makes a similar claim to structural motion by varying the imagery slightly, so that now

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The horse moves
independently
without reference
to his load

Like a kinetic poem, "he pulls when / he must and / pulls well" (CLP, 89).

Whereas the imagery of a horse suggests a substantial structure superior to mere "dream" or "load," "The Dish of Fruit" questions the relation between an arbitrary structure and the contents of the poem:

The table describes
nothing: four legs, by which
it becomes a table. Four lines
by which it becomes a quatrain,

the poem that lifts the dish
of fruit, if we say it is like
a table--how will it describe
the contents of the poem?

(CLP, 91)

The quatrain as artifice is not denounced in this poem, but it is seen as totally distinct from the poem's contents. The solution to this dichotomy is, it would seem, an agent of motion, as in "The Motor-Barge," which immediately follows this poem in The Collected Later Poems (p. 92). The poem opens in an atmosphere of stillness:

The motor-barge is
at the bridge the
air lead
the broken ice

unmoving

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The only motion is that of a gull, who flies "as / always, eyes alert // beak pointing / to the life-giving water." Frozen almost motionless, the river Time "falters,"--but for the river-craft. Seen as a poetic motion, this barge requires an energy of its own which can break through its barriers and perhaps create its own time even while it conveys a "heavy load."

The locus of the substantial structure would seem to be midpoint between the surface of the poem and the muddy bed of origin. Such an image is suggested in "The Bitter World of Spring," which moves from a photographic description of the scene to the issue confronting the poet:

. . . And, as usual,
the fight as to the nature of poetry
--Shall the philosophers capture it?--
is on. . . .

Continuing to look at the scene, the poet peers into the water where the shad ascend

midway between the surface and the mud,
and you can see their bodies
red-finned, in the dark
water headed, unrelenting, upstream.

(CLP, 75)

Thus, the locus of action is at the point of substantial structure.

The poems of The Collected Later Poems which combine the process of the mind with the imagery of

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nature, as do the half dozen poems just discussed, are the most effective in the volume. Concurrently, however, Williams betrays his concern with the process of the imagination by writing an increasing number of poems which deal solely with the activity of the mind and its record on the page. The poem "Writer's Prologue to a Play in Verse" (CLP, 12-15) is particularly interesting because it sets up the most radical claim for the power of the mind. The imagery of the verse suggests that the mind is the ultimate stage of action. The first section refers to a perception of reality which the poet copies for the benefit of the public:

. . . You see it
 in your minds and the mind at once
 jostles it, turns it about, examines
 and arranges it to suit its fancy.
 Or rather changes it after a pattern
 which is the mind itself, turning
 and twisting the theme until it gets
 a meaning or finds no meaning and
 is dropped. By such composition,
 without code, the scenes we see move
 and, as it may happen, make
 a music, a poetry
 which the poor poet copies if
 and only if he is able--to astonish
 and amuse, for your delights,
 in public, face to face with you
 individually and secretly addressed.

The ambiguity of the you suggests that the poetic process is universally available but perhaps can be apprehended and recorded musically only by the poet. The importance of the audience is emphasized in the next section:

The poet

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We are not here, you understand,
 but in the mind, that circumstance
 of which the speech is poetry.
 Then look, I beg of you, try and
 look within yourselves rather than
 at me for what I shall discover.
 Yourselves! Within yourselves. Tell
 me if you do not see there, alive!
 a creature unlike the others . . .

The poet instructs the audience that they cannot encounter
 themselves through the direct content of the play, which
 only distracts rather than relieves; instead, they must
 see themselves revealed on a level beyond language:

That's it. Yourself the thing
 you are, speechless--because there is
 no language for it, shockingly revealed.

With increasing intensity, the poet prods his audience:

Would it disturb you if I said
 you have no other speech than poetry?
 You, yourself, I mean. There is
 no other language for it than the poem
 --falsified by the critics until
 you think it's something else, fight
 it off, as idle, a kind of lie,
 smelling of corpses, that the practical
 world rejects. How could it be you?
 Never! without invention. It is, if
 you'll have patience, the undiscovered
 language of yourself, which you avoid,
 rich and poor, killed and killers,
 a language to be coaxed out of poets--
 possibly, an intolerable language
 that will frighten--to which
 you are not used. We must make it
 easy for you, feed it to you slowly
 until you let down the barriers,
 relax before it. But it's easy
 if you will allow me to proceed, it
 can make transformations, give it
 leave to do its work in you.

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In turning from perception to language, the poet has been able to reveal the reason poetry can reflect the self back to the viewer: the words and perceptions are taken from them originally, but they are powerless to hear their own speech until it is returned to them through the invention of the poet. He is the one who returns it to them as "the undiscovered / language of yourself."

The next section accepts the conventions of the arts only "provisionally," pointing toward the superior "revelation" to come. This revelation might not happen, or it might come in fragments. "But even the chips of it

are invaluable. Wait to learn
the hand of its persuasions as it makes
its transformations from the common
to the undisclosed and lays that open
where--you will see a frightened face!

Attempting to reconcile the mystical and the commonplace, the poet claims this power for his work:

But believe! that poetry will be
in the terms you know, insist on that
and can and must break through everything,
all the outward forms, to re-dress
itself humbly in that which you
yourself will say is the truth, the
exceptional truth of ordinary people,
the extraordinary truth. You shall see.

Continuing to stress the self-revealing power of poetry, the poet moves from the awe of all "the secret language that runs through / those curious transactions, seldom /

heard" to the healing laughter of self-recognition. "For pleasure," he insists in the conclusion,

For pleasure! pleasure, not for
cruelty but to make you laugh, until
you cry like General Washington
at the river. Seeing the travellers
bathing there who had had their clothes
stolen, how he laughed! And how
you shall laugh to see yourselves
all naked, on the stage!

The claim of the writer in this prologue is the power of the poem to reveal the self to itself. Further on in The Wedge he refers to a reconciliation not with self but with fragments of a world which can be juxtaposed only in his head (CLP, 42). The poems of this section typically assume the priority of the mind. Much of the imagery goes so far as to view man's perceptions as objective correlatives of his emotional state. "The Last Turn" refers to a variety of patterns as "the jazz / of the cross lights echoing the / crazy weave of the breaking mind" (CLP, 44).

"The Clouds" is a less subjective collection which points toward the objectivity of an external or communal point of view. A desire for that sea which is not our home is expressed in "Labrador." The firmness of the rocks and the bracing cold of the waters tempt the poet to enclose his "straining mind" (CLP, 68). In a similar manner "Design for November" promises the poet his own autumnal death wherein his mind can be "stripped

also and returned / to the ground, a trivial / and
 mementary clatter" (CLP, 87). Finally, the title poem
 offers the poet objective images of horses which are

visible! against the invisible; actual against
 the imagined and the concocted; unspoiled by hands
 and unshaped also by them but caressed by sight only,
 moving among them, not that that propels
 the eyes from under, while it blinds:

In praise of the objective, the poet condemns "The poor
 brain" which, "unwilling to own the obtrusive body"

would crawl from it like a crab and
 because it succeeds, at times, in doffing that,
 by its wiles of drugs or other "ecstasies," thinks

at last that it is quite free--exulted, scurrying to
 some slightly larger shell some snail
 has lost (where it will live). And so, thinking,
 pretends a mystery! an unbodied

thing that would still be a brain--but no body,
 something that does not eat but flies by the propulsions
 of pure--what? into the sun itself, illimitedly
 and exists so forever, blest, washed, purged

and at ease in non-representational bursts
 of shapeless flame, sentient (naturally!)--and keeps
 touch with the earth (by former works) at least.

Anticipating the imagery of Paterson, these verses turn
 caustically against the myth of disembodied thought.

Even though "The Clouds" is an appeal for objec-
 tivity, the poem does not escape from subjectivity by
 the very evidence that clouds are seen not as themselves
 but as horses. The midpoint between the objective-
 subjective extremes can be seen in Williams' poem, "The

"Mind Hesitant" (CLP, 118). In this poem, the poet at first cannot commit himself to state the means by which the mind apprehends a river:

Sometimes the river
 becomes a river in the mind
 or of the mind
 or in and of the mind

The second line assumes a philosophy which Sartre calls the illusion of immanence--the belief that images somehow occupy space within the mind.¹⁵ This belief gives objectivity to the river, but it places it within the mind's control. The third line attempts a greater claim: a river of the mind sounds very much like philosophical idealism. The last line of the stanza retreats to an attempted compromise between these two positions.

As the poet turns to a direct observation of the scene, he is drawn into a comparison between the river and his own stream of thought:

Its banks snow
 the tide falling a dark
 rim lies between
 the water and the shore

And the mind hesitant
 regarding the stream
 senses
 a likeness which it

will find--a complex
 image: something
 of white brows
 bound by a ribbon

of sooty thought
beyond, yes well beyond
the mobile features
of swiftly

flowing waters, before
the tide will
change
and rise again, maybe

It is true that the poet ends up using the river metaphorically to represent the movements of the mind. What is more important, however, is the fact that he begins to identify the mind with a natural process to the extent that the human mind takes its place among other of the world's natural forces. Instead of the duality of mind and nature in which the mind must capture nature in mental imagery, the mind is now objectified as a power paralleling natural forces.

This tendency to reinstate the mind within nature also dominates "The Words Lying Idle" (CLP, 106). As in "The Mind Hesitant," this poem begins with a descriptive passage:

The fields parched, the leaves
drying on the maples, the birds' beaks
gaping! if it would rain,
if it would only rain! Clouds come up,
move from the west and from the south
but they bring no rain. Heat and dry winds
--the grass is curled and brittle underfoot,
the foot leaves it broken. The roads are dust.

Only in the second stanza is the mind shown to share the characteristics of the external scene. Unlike the

convention of the pathetic fallacy, the imagery of this poem does not imply a biased observer who reads his own emotions into nature. Rather, a literal description elicits a personal application as the poet notes a similarity between the mind and its environment. It is the scene which affects the mind, rather than vice versa:

But the mind is dust also
and the eyes burn from it. They burn more
from restless nights, from the full moon shining
on a dry earth than from lack of rain.
The rain, if it fell, would ease the mind
more than the grass, the mind would
be somewhat, at least, appeased against
this dryness and the death implied.

Because Williams works from the objective reality rather than from his own emotional center, he moves beyond Eliot's objective correlative. Compare, for instance, the beginning of "Gerontion"--

Here I am, an old man in a dry month,
Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain¹⁶

in which the persona is present from the opening line. Eliot begins the trend to reinstate man within his environment when he protests against the subjective language of the Romantics. Yet, he still begins with emotions and only then chooses objects as appropriate vehicles. Williams begins by observing his objective environment, is attracted to its concrete value, and thus begins exploring relationships, which include his own emotions.

Bernard Duffey does not make this distinction when he claims that Williams is primarily lyrical. Duffey defines lyricism as "feeling experimenting with its objects."¹⁷ Within this definition, it is true that Williams found the solution to the stalemate of his objectivist period by finally realizing "that his opinions and emotions, as integral parts of his local, had legitimate places in the poem."¹⁸ Yet, by noting that Williams begins with the object rather than with the emotion, we discover his greater harmony with Nature: he functions within Nature, rather than organizing it from without. Emotions are reciprocal, and the energies of Nature flow into him as they do into other objects. Rather than the generating dynamo who conveys emotions as objectively as possible, he is the transparent center who processes both external and internal forces. So defined, his poetic universe resembles the cosmology of Alfred North Whitehead, wherein "we cannot tell with what molecules the body ends and the external world begins" (AI, 290, 271).

CHAPTER III

WHITEHEAD AND THE DESIGN OF THE ACTUAL

In order to explain the revolutionary nature of Whitehead's philosophy, I need to review the Cartesian dilemma. By identifying various literary positions within this framework, I hope to clarify the uniqueness of Williams, who seems to move in the direction Whitehead defines.

Poetry shares with philosophy an attempt to understand the dynamics whereby man knows beyond himself. Whereas philosophy attacks this problem directly through the study of epistemology, poetry more typically works upon assumptions which are never stated. The corollary question arises as to the locus of meaning. Is meaning immanent, transcendent, or inaccessible? The philosophic and literary history of these two concerns creates a drama of man's expulsion from nature.

Originally, man seemed almost an extension of an environment full of meaning. Sensing the physical and spiritual forces potential in his world, primitive man deified the mysteries of nature, naming gods and

creating myths to explain the unknown. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, Jehovah and Christ were links to the unknown. Thus, from the savage to the civilized Greek to the practical Roman to the medieval fief or lord, man accepted his kinship with the external world. When he felt displaced, he lamented his severance from his original home but not from all of nature. The unending resistance of Prometheus and of Sisyphus was the exception, not the rule.

Until the time of the Renaissance, man interacted with his environment as with a superior. Seeing nature as larger and more powerful than he, man frequently felt himself to be mastered more than he was master. He obtained access to the mysteries of nature primarily through mental powers. The scholasticism of the sixth through the sixteenth centuries identified faith and reason as the avenues of understanding. Boethius urged in a very short tractate on the Holy Trinity, "join faith to reason." Throughout this period, revelation, authority or tradition established faith, while reason variously defined the powers of the mind. The emphasis was upon the general truths of a world valuable because it was larger than man--a world understood partly by reason and accepted further through faith.

The Renaissance repropotioned everything to a human scale as man became the measure of all things.

Suddenly, man was more interested in exploring himself as an agent capable of mastering his world. Hence, Descartes (1596-1650) began with individual awareness as the basis of knowledge. Subsequently, instead of man's being a part of a vast world controlled by a higher power, man placed himself in opposition to a world only partially accessible. The Cartesian cogito initiated a world view which began with man's separation from nature.

With the development of Newtonian physics, direct observation and experimentation replaced rationalism and faith as the methods of knowing one's world. Since scientific laws seemed so predictable and reliable, subsequently a deterministic theory explained the behavior of all objective phenomena in the impersonal terms of the laws of inertia, gravitation and the conservation of energy. As John Scott shows in his review of this period, "Everything in the system, including the human body, [was] regarded as a mechanism capable of transforming energy according to fixed patterns, but incapable of developing new patterns or of gaining or losing energy."¹ John Locke (1632-1704) divided qualities into primary and secondary categories, emphasizing the fact that whereas some qualities are supplied by the external world, others are a function of man's perceiving apparatus. Later, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) emphasized man's isolation in a deterministic world by insisting that one must interpret the

external world through the internal structure of his own a priori ideas. This made the mode of experience less one of direct contact and more one of internal interpretation. Ironically, once man gained the tools to understand himself and his world better and to develop technologically, he experienced an alienation from the external and a loss of contact with material ground. His experience was barricaded by the distinction between matter and mind.

The imaginative writers since Descartes have been faced with the challenge of this divorce. Initially, the eighteenth century seemed scarcely aware of the problems to come, moving forward in the optimism that "whatever is, is right." Although Alexander Pope in his "Essay on Man" could insist, "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; / The proper study of Mankind is Man" (II, 1-2), he rested in the confidence of the unity and order of his environment:

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body, Nature is, and God the soul;
That, chang'd thro' all, and yet in all the same,

Lives thro' all life, extends thro' all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent,
Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;

(I, 267-9, 273-76)²

As the Romantics shifted their attention from the general to the particular, the division between self

and world became more apparent. For the diversity of the world offered not only infinite variety but also infinite challenge. For a Wordsworth, the comfortable environment of the Lake District of his childhood was difficult to match in the bustle of Cambridge and the confusion of the French Revolution. The ultimate discomfort comes with the British Victorian, Matthew Arnold, and the American Henry Adams. Arnold anticipates an existential alienation from self and others as well as from nature in his lamenting metaphor for "Empedocles":

Hither and thither spins
The wind-borne, mirroring soul,
A thousand glimpses wins,
And never sees a whole³

Adams is frustrated with the same multiplicity and chaos, deciding finally that a man must discover his own order in a confusing universe:

Every man with self-respect enough to become effective, if only as a machine, has had to account to himself for himself somehow, and to invent a formula of his own for his universe, if the standard formulas failed.⁴

It is the condition of apparent complexity combined with the difficulty of believing in either the adequacy of reason or the reliability of faith which makes the separation between self and the world problematic. Science says knowledge of the world comes from direct observation; therefore, reason must function on

facts directly observable. Philosophy says that one's knowledge is limited to his own experience, even though there is a world out there to be observed. However well one understands the world scientifically, one lacks the tools to experience it directly; solipsism results. Some leap must be made to transcend one's isolation.

There have been various literary solutions to this complex problem of man's separation from a nature which is itself diverse and deterministic. I have noted the affirmation and acceptance of the eighteenth century, which never relinquished its faith in reason, as inherited from the scholastics. It was the Romantics of the nineteenth century who first sensed the divorce, reacted to the scientific method, and attempted a new marriage between man and his world.

J. Hillis Miller demonstrates that for all romantics, the image is the solution to the subject-object dichotomy.⁵ For the British Romantics, the image indicated the power of the mind to bridge the gap between the individual and his world. At one extreme stood Wordsworth, offering commonplace objects in a fairly ordinary language. Williams shares many of Wordsworth's concerns when he commissions the imagination to raise the ordinary world to expression. At the other extreme stands Coleridge, reaching toward supernatural and unusual images and dimensions of experience. In both, however, the

poetic image is the point of entry into the experience of a world outside the self.

Most poets used the image primarily as an aesthetic device even though they sometimes explained their theories in partially scientific terms. For explanation, the Romantics often relied on the theory of associationism, which posited a correlation between the external and the internal worlds. David Hartley (1705-1757) and David Hume (1711-1776) explained that internal feelings of mind arise as a result of impressions made by external objects. They treated mind and body as parts of a coordinate system capable of influencing each other. On the spiritual level, the Romantics often sought a mystical union with the transcendental order. The French Symbolists envisioned the most intense, esoteric experience, as in Baudelaire's "Correspondences." In this poem, Baudelaire sees man as living "ironically / In the midst of forests filled with dire confusions." He "passes symbolically / Under the eyes of the birds watching his illusions," while corresponding external and internal perfumes and colours "seize the spirit and the senses exquisite."⁶

In America and England, imagism owed much stylistically to the symbolist movement, but the writings of Pound and of his followers involved ordinary human emotions more than transcendental yearnings. Rather than pointing out correspondences to a distant realm of

experience, these images referred horizontally to internal emotions and ideas by means of external objects. In Pound's famous definition, first published in Poetry (March 1913), an image is "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." On the one hand, one can interpret this figure as one more form of correspondence, this time between emotions and objects. With this interpretation, the image is primarily a way to avoid what Pound calls "emotional slither"; it is a means of objectifying experience by choosing representative objects or situations which are arbitrary although apt. Eliot states it this way:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an objective correlative; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. If you examine any of Shakespeare's more successful tragedies, you will find this exact equivalence. . . .⁷

This focus is upon the reader's response to objects, recalling Whitman's prophecy of audience participation in creating the work of art. But on the other hand, we are moving toward a closer unity of experience in which personal thoughts and emotions are reunited with objects. The distinction is whether the participation is direct, or figurative and representative. Pound's definition allows for either interpretation.

As both literary man and philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre contributes another aspect to our understanding of the image. In attempting a psychological definition of the imagination, Sartre identifies three modes of consciousness: "To perceive, conceive, imagine: these are the three types of consciousness by which the same object can be given to us."⁸ He maintains the distinction between the external and internal worlds, and continues to see the image as a uniting factor. However, he takes great pains to refute what he calls the illusion of immanence, by which he means the theory that images somehow occupy space within the mind. This shifts the emphasis from a particle theory to a diagram of relations. As he protests in Imagination:

There is no avoiding the straightforward answer that so long as images are inert psychic contents, there is no conceivable way to reconcile them with the requirements of synthesis. An image can only enter into consciousness if it is itself a synthesis, not an element. There are not, and never could be, images in consciousness. Rather, an image is a certain type of consciousness. An image is an act, not some thing.⁹

He goes on to clarify in Psychology of the Imagination:

The world image . . . indicates the relation of consciousness to the object; in other words, it means a certain manner in which the object makes its appearance to consciousness, or, if one prefers, a certain way in which consciousness presents an object to itself . . . an image is nothing else than a relationship.¹⁰

Thus, Sartre encourages us to recognize the dynamic nature of consciousness.

Even earlier, Henry Adams had pointed in the direction of dynamism as he attempted to locate man in history. After struggling unsuccessfully to discover an easy unity among disparate parts, Adams abrogates the attempt to identify a predictable pattern and turns instead to the task of measuring between points. Arriving at the paradox that "the scientific synthesis commonly called Unity was the scientific analysis commonly called Multiplicity. The two were the same, all forms being shifting phases of motion,"¹¹ he reaches the conclusion that "Any schoolboy could see that man as a force must be measured by motion, from a fixed point."¹²

Without becoming involved in the intricacies of these various positions, it is sufficient to recognize the direction they indicate. Instead of designing leaps of faith or of reason, these theories of consciousness and of metaphysics attempt to discover relational values. Rather than a static pattern, they seek a dynamic design. And in spite of the deterministic universe bequeathed by Newton, a vision of motion if not freedom captures men's imagination.

The significance of Whitehead's philosophy is the way in which it expands upon process and relation until it defines actuality itself as a dynamic event.

It allows a man literally to step "barefoot into reality" (Wallace Stevens' term), and makes the terms subject and object only superficially true since a subject is an object from another perspective and an object helps create its subject. For the event (later called an "actual entity" or "actual occasion") is an aggregate of multiple perspectives forming a co-created, dynamic whole. Each part of the universe is seen at once as related to all other parts and as distinctly valuable. Furthermore, each part has potential for life and novelty, whether animate or supposedly inanimate. Thus, each event is subject both to the persuasion of external influence and to the autonomy of its subjective aim. As Victor Lowe says of these various positions, Whitehead's conceptions

. . . are intended to be so inclusive in scope, and so interlocked, as to overcome all the classical dualisms of metaphysics: mind and matter, God and the world, permanence and transience, causality and teleology, atomism and continuity, sensation and emotion, internal and external relations, etc., as well as subject and object. Thus, e.g., "physical" inheritance from the environment and novel "mental" reaction to it, are both, in principle, ascribed to every occasion, as respectively its public basis and its private culmination. It makes no difference that the "mentality" involved in inorganic occasions is slight in proportion as spontaneity is negligible. The objections to this are not as good as the objections to calling "zero" a number.¹³

John Scott claims that Husserl, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, G. E. Moore, James and Dewey were all trying to resolve contradictions involved in Cartesian habits

of thought.¹⁴ In a convincing study, he demonstrates the modern shift to a "contextual approach" by quoting Dewey, James, Pierce and Pepper primarily, illustrating this change in the longer poems of Wallace Stevens, Williams, and T. S. Eliot. He refers only occasionally to Whitehead, however.

In another study, Craig Eisendrath explores the "unifying moment" in James and Whitehead. According to Eisendrath,

Together, James and Whitehead offer a philosophy which represents an alternative line to that of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty on the one side and the logical positivists on the other. The James-Whitehead philosophy comes closest to that point where real things are making themselves up out of the materials of their own existence. It is an attempt to analyze this unifying moment, both as a subjective fact for the thing itself and as the introduction of a new objective fact in the causal history of the world. With James and Whitehead, we are back to that time of primal chaos which Plato writes about when the forces of creativity are seen catching up the world and guiding or persuading it into the organized forms in which it appears. For Whitehead and James, this work is taking place in every moment.¹⁵

Furthermore, Eisendrath sees Whitehead as superior to James in his success. Whitehead praised James as the philosophic challenge to Cartesian dualism. He rejoiced that

The scientific materialism and the Cartesian Ego were both challenged at the same moment, one by science and the other by philosophy, as represented

by William James with his psychological antecedents; and the double challenge marks the end of a period which lasted for about two hundred and fifty years.

(SMW, 205-06)

Yet, according to Eisendrath,

It was not James but Whitehead, with his background in mathematics and physics, who could draw the philosophic conclusions from the decline of mechanism. James's view of the physical sciences was generally that of a push-pull materialism, "the belief that the hidden order of nature is mechanical exclusively, and that non-mechanical categories are irrational ways of conceiving and explaining even such things as human life." James did grasp the statistical side of modern physical thought, and he appeared to be familiar with the work of such physicists as Maxwell, Mach, Thomson, Boltzmann, and Planck. Nevertheless, the more significant advances in physics which occurred in his lifetime, from the field equations of Clerk Maxwell to Einstein's special theory, seem to have had little effect on his basic thinking. Their effect on Whitehead, however, was decisive: "There is not a single concept of the Newtonian physics which was taught as a whole truth, that has not now been displaced. . . . This experience has profoundly affected my thinking. To have supposed you had certitude once, and certitude about the solidest-looking thing in the universe, and then to have had it blow up on your hands into inconceivable infinities has affected everything else in the universe for me."¹⁶

It seems to me that through their respective fields, Whitehead and Williams illustrate the most radical modern attempt to reinstate man in his world. Each enters his world directly without the strain of a mystical union or of a leap in the dark. Meaning inheres for them in the acts of integration which reconcile the world. By discussing or designing a creative reciprocity among parts which are both singly autonomous and plurally

related, they provide a meaningful definition of the actual. It is for this reason that I have chosen to compare Williams with Whitehead. Although I begin by identifying direct influences, I discuss other philosophical concepts which help to clarify Williams' practice.

Most critics divide Whitehead's life into three periods. The first two periods (1891-1923) find Whitehead involved first with mathematics and then with natural science, and are primarily beyond the scope of this paper. Only at the age of sixty-three did Whitehead turn his attention directly to philosophy when he moved to Harvard in 1924.

I am beginning with Science and the Modern World (1925) since it is this book we know Williams read. Yet, Whitehead repeats the same basic ideas with increased fullness and sometimes greater clarity throughout his works. In The Concept of Nature (1920) he was already protesting the false idea that nature exists merely as an aggregate of independent entities, and he was arguing for the integrative view of nature. He soon attacked the division of facts into subjects and predicates. "If you once conceive fundamental fact as a multiplicity of subjects qualified by predicates," he pointed out in The Principle of Relativity, with Applications to Physical Science (1922),

. . . you must fail to give a coherent account of experience. The disjunction of subjects is the pre-supposition from which you start, and you can only account for conjunctive relations by some fallacious sleight of hand, such as Leibniz's metaphor of his monads engaged in mirroring. The alternative philosophic position must commence with denouncing the whole idea of "subject qualified by predicate" as a trap set for philosophers by the syntax of language.¹⁷

The other works most relevant to this study are Religion in the Making (1926), Symbolism, Its Meaning and Effect (1927), Process and Reality (1929), Adventures of Ideas (1933), and Modes of Thought (1938).

ii

Mike Weaver describes Williams' period of depression following the publication of Eliot's The Waste Land. In a letter to John Riordan, 23 December 1925, Williams complained:

I must say Eliot inspires me with dread--since I see him finished and I do not find myself stepping beyond him. Since I cannot compete with him in knowledge . . . what is left for me but to fall back upon words? There is no more dependant upon philosophic catastrophies or past examples of writing than are the words themselves. . . .

It is no use going in bull-headed either, blindly hoping by slopping about in vers libre to write "poetry." It's been tried. Nor do we have to wait for new discoveries in philosophy to be at least adept. . . .

There is no satisfactory philosophy of art, no more than there is a satisfactory philosophy of a stone. Science, at least, as you say stays on the fact. . . .

For myself I don't know what to do. I must write poetry. That's where the opportunity lies. The answer to Eliot, as to Pound, is careful, thoroughly organized work, that discovers beyond them. . . .¹⁸

John Riordan was a young engineer, a friend of Williams and a fellow-student of the A. R. Orage writing class in New York. Together, Williams and Riordan were searching for a precise form, informed both by Orage's training in the Gurdjieffian discipline of observation without analysis or intellectuality, and their mutual interest in mathematics and the theory of relativity. According to Weaver, it was Riordan who introduced Williams to Steinmetz on relativity and to Alfred North Whitehead.

Riordan's essay, "The Theory and Practice of Precision Poetry," reviewed Whitehead's analysis of perception, identifying three relationships in the act of perception: the observer, position in space, and point in time. Weaver summarizes Riordan's conclusions:

Riordan noted that mechanistic science had done its best to eliminate the human observer by means of invariable measuring instruments, attempting the maximum reduction of accidental or casual experiences by abstraction:

"Aesthetics to enjoy a similar clarity in taking its place beside science toward a comprehensive signification of man in his relation to the universe must assume the field science is unable to enter, functioning to reduce the contingent relationships within a percipient observer's bodily life."

In this way he stated as the function of art, and of poetry in particular, a new kind of precision, equivalent to scientific method but directed towards objectivising experience. To do this the writer had to become his own reader, a functioning perceiver observing himself in action.¹⁹

According to Weaver, Riordan proposed in March, 1926, that he and Williams write a "Modern Prosody" together:

Measurement at one level involved the practical concern of a new metre, and at the level of a general aesthetic implied a philosophy of the percipient act.²⁰

Riordan suggested that they use Steinmetz on relativity in their search to identify a functional foot. As a resource for the philosophy, Riordan presented Williams with a copy of Whitehead's Science and the Modern World. Receiving the copy in December, Williams completed his reading assignment on a trip abroad the next year and evidently was greatly influenced. In the inscribed copy he wrote: "Finished reading it at sea, Sept. 26, 1927-- A milestone surely in my career, should I have the force and imagination to go on with my work."²¹ He also wrote to Flossie from aboard the S. S. Pennland, Tuesday, September 27, 1927, "Yesterday I finished my philosophy. The last chapters are easy and very fine. They deal with art and manners. If you ever get hold of the book, Science and the Modern World (Whitehead) you should read the final chapters . . . " (SL, 79).

A comparative study of Whitehead and of Williams reveals the fact that Williams was already using many principles inherent in Whitehead's philosophy. The most revolutionary concept for Williams at this time was perhaps Whitehead's stress upon the invaluable role of the

arts. There must have been great reassurance in finding a carefully constructed philosophy capable of supporting Williams' own aesthetic, for Williams had lamented the lack of a philosophy of art. For Williams, the value of Whitehead was no doubt its reaffirming statements and theories. For us, the value of studying Whitehead is in finding descriptive terms through which better to understand the assumptions of Williams' aesthetic.

Weaver extracts the portions from Science and the Modern World which relate specifically to the Objectivist theory--"the precise definitions of the emotions in their relation to experience by means of observing oneself in the act of experiencing the world."²² This observation of the self seems to have been of primary importance to Riordan, who praised Williams for his objective quality already displayed in Kora in Hell. We can see the operation of objective self-observation more explicitly in a poem such as "Danse Russe," in which the poet evaluates himself before his mirror:

if I in my north room
dance naked, grotesquely
before my mirror
waving my shirt round my head
and singing softly to myself . . .

(CEP, 148)

This is also the technique of the multiple character of Paterson, and one aspect of Williams' last poems. As

late as Pictures from Brueghel we find the mirror image
in "Address," where the poet identifies a look in his
son's eyes

that I have seen
 often enough
 in the mirror
 (PB, 144)

Williams himself in the twenties and thirties regarded
Objectivism more aesthetically than philosophically; his
purpose was to create an autonomous, measured object.
Noting the disintegration of Imagism into free verse,
Williams denies that there is such a thing as free verse,
since "Verse is measure of some sort." His interpretation
of the argument of the Objectivist theory contends that

. . . the poem, like every other form of art,
is an object, an object that in itself formally
presents its case and its meaning by the very form
it assumes. Therefore, being an object, it should
be so treated and controlled--but not as in the
past. For past objects have about them past
necessities--like the sonnet--which have con-
ditioned them and from which, as a form itself,
they cannot be freed.

The poem being an object (like a symphony or
cubist painting) it must be the purpose of the
poet to make of his words a new form: to invent,
that is, an object consonant with his day. This
was what we wished to imply by Objectivism, an
antidote, in a sense, to the bare image haphazardly
presented in loose verse.

(A, 265)

As a philosopher, Whitehead's emphasis is upon
the object of experience more than upon art objects. He

addresses himself in Science and the Modern World to several issues which Williams does not consider but which nonetheless are characteristic of Williams' practice. In his first chapter, he traces the origin of modern science back to the rise of Naturalism in the later Middle Ages--"the rise of interest in natural objects and in natural occurrences, for their own sake" (SMW, 15). The roots of modern science, he says, are grounded in a faith in the order of nature:

This faith cannot be justified by any inductive generalization. It springs from direct inspection of the nature of things as disclosed in our own immediate present experience. . . . To experience this faith is to know . . . that our experience, dim and fragmentary as it is, yet sounds the utmost depths of reality: to know that detached details merely in order to be themselves demand that they should find themselves in a system of things: to know that this system includes the harmony of logical rationality, and the harmony of aesthetic achievement: to know that, while the harmony of logic lies upon the universe as an iron necessity, the aesthetic harmony stands before it as a living ideal moulding the general flux in its broken progress toward finer, subtler issues.

(SMW, 18)

Hence, the necessary assumptions of science and art are the importance of the specific objects of experience and a faith that things by nature exist in an orderly pattern. Along with the craftsmen who executed the late medieval decorative sculpture, Whitehead nominates Giotto, Chaucer, Wordsworth, Walt Whitman and Robert Frost as the

representative artists who appreciated the material reality surrounding them (SMW, 15).

In contrast to this materialism, Whitehead finds the condition of mathematics to be one of complete abstraction. The necessity of abstraction is obvious when one realizes that mathematics is concerned solely with relationships. It would be impossible for numbers to rely upon the particular, or else mathematical truths would apply to only one kind of object at a time--"merely to fish, or merely to stones, or merely to colours" (SMW, 21). Because of its very abstractness, a number "is in some sense exempt from the flux of time and of necessity of position in space" (SMW, 27). At the same time, it is involved in the real world. Similar principles control the geometric figures, such as circular shape. Hence, Pythagoras is said to have taught "that the mathematical entities, such as numbers and shapes, were the ultimate stuff out of which the real entities of our perceptual experience are constructed" (SMW, 27). Whitehead concludes that "the practical counsel to be derived from Pythagoras, is to measure, and thus to express quality in terms of numerically determined quantity." Unfortunately, he laments, the biological sciences have been influenced by Aristotle, who "by his Logic throws the emphasis on classification. If only the schoolmen had measured instead of classifying, how much they might have learnt!" (SMW, 28).

So far we find at least four principles which Whitehead and Williams share. First, there is the emphasis upon natural objects and specific experience as the source of entry into the realm of reality and order. Such a concept parallels Dewey's model, which moves from the particular to the general, as well as Williams' own preference. Secondly, Whitehead places the aesthetic harmony above the harmony of logic. Thirdly, we find an emphasis upon mathematics and especially upon the term measure, which is a prominent word in Williams' vocabulary. Finally, we find Whitehead attempting to unite Naturalism and idealism, the material of objects and the abstraction of mathematics. In a similar manner, Williams finds "no ideas but in things."

Whitehead next turns his discussion to more daring efforts to outline a new vision of reality. First, he identifies "simple location in space-time" as the basic assumption underlying the whole philosophy of nature during the modern period. From this assumption comes a description of the world as "a succession of instantaneous configurations of matter--or of material, if you wish to include stuff more subtle than ordinary matter, the ether for example" (SMW, 50). By "configurations of material" he means the location of a specific substance (solid, liquid or gaseous) in a clearly defined area during a set segment of time. Thus reality would

consist of those objects of experience which we can measure and weigh. Because such a definition seems to be backed by experience, it has reigned supreme since the seventeenth century as the famous mechanistic theory of nature. But, Whitehead says,

. . . the difficulties of this theory of materialistic mechanism very soon became apparent. The history of thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is governed by the fact that the world had got hold of a general idea which it could neither live with nor live without.

(SMW, 50)

At this point, Whitehead credits Henri Bergson with a similar protest against modern materialism. Bergson identifies the problem as man's distortion of nature, due to his intellectual spatialisation of things. Bergson distinguishes between appearance and reality. Whitehead agrees with Bergson in his protest, but he identifies the fundamental error to be that of mistaking abstractions for concrete realities. Using abstract, logical deduction, we assume that objects are separated by time and space, that they have simple location. Yet, he claims, "I do not agree that such distortion is a vice necessary to the intellectual apprehension of nature" (SMW, 50). Thus, he intends to surpass Bergson by suggesting a solution which rejects the necessity of Kant's categories. The fact that Williams is closer to Whitehead than to Bergson points up one of his distinctions from Wallace

Stevens. Stevens, who appears to follow Bergson, emphasizes the mind's various perspectives of reality and the inadequacy of any one. Hence, he explores thirteen ways to look at a blackbird, or he has the object appear to change before the subject's eyes. Williams, as we will see, parallels Whitehead's development toward organism.

The problem as Whitehead sees it is the mind-matter, subject-object dichotomy. All of this, he claims, leaves modern philosophy with three unsatisfactory extremes: "There are the dualists, who accept matter and mind as on an equal basis, and the two varieties of monist, those who put mind inside matter, and those who put matter inside mind" (SMW, 55).

Whitehead's solution is founded upon what he calls "the ultimate concept of organism." First, he deals with space-time. Objects have three characteristics, he says: their separative character from each other; their prehensive character, which means that they are also together with other objects; and their modal character, which is the limitation to one specific shape at any one specific time. The modal character alone suggests the concept of space-time. The separative character might be illustrated by dividing a space, such as the volume of a room, into sub-spaces, and so indefinitely. The prehensive character, however, is the one of experience--the unity of all the parts into the single room.

Whitehead seems especially interested that his theory should be based upon both logic and experience. He builds his case by proving that every object or point in time has a prehensive unity because of the fact that it is in relation to some other object or time, and thus is an ordered aggregate of a larger whole. Using Leibniz's language, he says that "every volume mirrors in itself every other volume in space."

Thus if A and B and C are volumes of space, B has an aspect from the standpoint of A, and so has C, and so has the relationship of B and C. This aspect of B from A is of the essence of A. The volumes of space have no independent existence. They are only entities as within the totality; you cannot extract them from their environment without destruction of their very essence.

(SMW, 65)

Hence, the essence of a point, A, contains within itself the aspects of surrounding points--B, C, etc. It also contains aspects of the relationships between those surrounding points, B-C, etc. Conversely, those surrounding points are influenced by the original point, A:

Accordingly, I will say that the aspect of B from A is the mode in which B enters into the composition of A. This is the modal character of space, that the prehensive unity of A is the prehension into unity of the aspects of all other volumes from the standpoint of A. The shape of a volume is the formula from which the totality of its aspects can be derived.

(SMW, 65)

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So related, each point in space (or time) becomes an integral part of all other points, forming an organic whole. From this base, Whitehead constructs his solution to the subject-object dichotomy. Rather than separate subjects and objects, the totality of the relationship forms a unity, or a prehension--a prehensive unity. Space and time are only abstractions used in explaining the process; it is the process which counts. Hence, we replace the theory of materialistic mechanism with one of organic mechanism. Standing objectively outside each prehensive unity, or event, we can see that the subject and the object enter into a common world in which the cognising subject and the things experienced are on equal terms but in an integral relationship of interaction and reciprocity.

Whitehead recommends the objectivist position as the best interpretation of the organic world. The limiting, subjectivist basis he defines as "the belief that the nature of our immediate experience is the outcome of the perceptive peculiarities of the subject enjoying the experience" (SMW, 88). Hence, it reveals the individual peculiarities of the cognitive act of one individual and is strictly personal. By contrast, the objectivist position is "that the actual elements of a common world; and that this world is a complex of things, including indeed our acts of cognition, but transcending them"

(SMW, 88).

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(SMW, 88). From an objectivist standpoint, the things experienced are distinguished from the subject's knowledge of them; they are independent in a common world which transcends knowledge. Furthermore, so far as there is dependence upon the subject, "the things pave the way for the cognition, rather than vice versa" (SMW, 89). Hence, the subject is within a world of sense-objects, which are related to each other as well as to the subject. The importance of such a view lies in the fact that it allows the subject external knowledge: "My point is, that in our sense-experience we know away from and beyond our own personality; whereas the subjectivist holds that in such experience we merely know about our own personality" (SMW, 89).

In his poetry, Williams does not break completely away from the romantic approach toward perception which Whitehead criticizes. Yet, he always approaches and sometimes achieves an objectivist-prehensive model. Most apparent is the way in which the object usually reaches out to the poet and effects a change upon him. Note the reciprocity in the subject-object relationship of "Bird":

Bird with outstretched
wings poised
inviolable upreaching

yet reaching
your image this November
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 miraculously fixed in my
 arresting eyes

(PB, 41)

There should be a pause after reaching in the fourth line to clarify the narrative. Yet, the ambiguity of "reaching / your image" suggests the relationship between the bird (object) and the persona's perception of the bird (image). In using the word image rather than object or form, Williams lingers perhaps in a phenomenological mode, suggesting even that the object (bird) is inviolate and unreaching until it be perceived as an image. Yet, the act of perception is seen as direct and involving, depending as much upon the object as the subject.

The power of the object is a common assumption within Williams' verse. Nowhere is the power more apparent than in the brief poem, "Iris," where the attraction of the object is phenomenal:

a burst of iris so that
 come down for
 breakfast

we searched through the
 rooms for
 that

sweetest odor and at
 first could not
 find its

source then a blue as
 of the sea
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startling us from among
those trumpeting
petals

(PB, 30)

In this description, the fragrance of the iris moves the persona to physical action. In "To Daphne and Virginia," the smell of boxwood heat rouses the poet to the action of thinking. The movement of the air stirs up thoughts which previously "Had not life in them"; and the mingling of thoughts, current sensations and present realities produces a complex atmosphere of unity. There is an organic wholeness, a type of gestalt, in the content and form of the poem:

The box odor
 is the odor of that of which
 partaking separately,

each to herself
 I partake also
 . . . separately.

(PB, 75)

Rather than correspondence between object and mind, we have direct interaction.

"The Mind Hesitant" is a poem which builds upon the obvious correlation between a flowing river and the mind's stream of consciousness. The imagery is more than a simple metaphor, however, in that it explores the relation between the external object of the river and the river's presence within the mind--a complex image

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in which characteristics of the subject mingle with descriptions of the river found in nature. The focus of interaction appears between stanza two and stanzas four and five:

Sometimes the river
becomes a river in the mind
or of the mind
or in and of the mind

Its banks snow
the tide falling a dark
rim lies between
the water and the shore

And the mind hesitant
regarding the stream
senses
a likeness which it

will find--a complex
image: something
of white brows
bound by a ribbon

of sooty thought
beyond, yes well beyond
the mobile features
of swiftly

flowing waters, before
the tide will
change
and rise again, maybe

(CLP, 118)

The logical conclusion of linking subjects and objects in a complex relationship is to allow objects to interact with themselves as well as upon the subject. Williams achieves such a complex of reciprocity in the poem "Good Night." The narrative level of this poem describes the homely event of getting a glass of water

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before retiring for the night. As the persona goes to the sink, he finds the various objects in order around him:

In brilliant gas light
I turn the kitchen spigot
and watch the water splash
into the clean white sink.
On the grooved drain-board
to one side is
a glass filled with parsley--
crisped green.

Waiting
for the water to freshen--
I glance at the spotless floor--:
a pair of rubber sandals
lie side by side
under the wall-table
all is in order for the night.

As he stands there, suddenly his mind flashes to the memory of attending an opera, complete with all the sense impressions of that occasion:

Waiting, with a glass in my hand
--three girls in crimson satin
pass close before me on
the murmurous background of
the crowded opera--

it is
memory playing the clown--
three vague, meaningless girls
full of smells and
the rustling sounds of
cloth rubbing on cloth and
little slippers on carpet--
high-school French
spoken in a loud voice!

As his mind wanders, it is the presence of an immediate object which reaches out to him and draws him back to the present:

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Parsley in a glass,
 still and shining,
 brings me back. I take a drink
 and yawn deliciously.
 I am ready for bed.

(CEP, 145-46)

Hence, spread out as though displayed upon a painter's canvas, the objects of this poem are shown in careful relationship to each other. The painting contains the surreal elements of the dream as well; and furthermore, the artist himself is featured on the canvas. The unity of the piece can easily be interpreted as the prehensive unity which Whitehead describes, the reciprocal relationships of a single or multiple event.

Whitehead praises the significance of the single event and explores its internal relationships. However, even as the event is comprised of organic, internal relationships, it is also related to other events and to other points in time. Thus, "An event has contemporaries. This means that an event mirrors within itself modes of its contemporaries as a display of immediate achievement." Furthermore, an event "has a past. This means that an event mirrors within itself the modes of its predecessors, as memories which are fused into its own content." Finally, an event "has a future. This means that an event mirrors within itself such aspects as the future throws back on the present, or, in other words, as the present has determined concerning the future. Thus an

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event has anticipation." In brief, "there is in the world for our cognisance, memory of the past, immediacy of realisation, and indication of things to come" (SMW, 72-73).

Such is Whitehead's basic vision of actuality, as Williams was able to read it. To clarify, let us look briefly at Process and Reality, where Whitehead expresses himself more completely. There, he calls events either "actual entities" or "actual occasions." These myriads of "individuals" are the substantive part of actuality, even though they may not have the ontological solidity of traditional matter. They are "the final things of which the world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real" (PR, 319).

The nature of an event, or actual entity, is process and change. What constitutes its very being is its process of becoming (PR, 33-34). This process is called concrescence, which means to "grow together" (PR, 32). The process of concrescence is the syntheses of a multitude of data into a novel unity. Prehension is thus understood as a unifying process through which the actual entity is created.

The concept of prehension finally suggests an interlocking system of entities whereby some aspect of every event is contained in another event. For once the

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process of concrescence reaches its novel synthesis, it reaches what Whitehead calls "satisfaction." By abstraction, we might define this process as either brief or extensive. The entity then possesses "objective immortality," which means that it becomes a datum of the past which in turn serves as an efficient cause for the beginning of a new concrescence (PR, 38, 71, 76, 251-52, 281, 323). This adds one more to the many, ad infinitum. Through this fluctuating transition between the one and many, the world as a whole can be seen as a novel, growing, organic process overlapping in various schemes of time and space.

So enlarged, this organic interpretation of reality seems tailor-made for a longer poem, such as Paterson. On the mythic level, the giant Paterson, who represents elemental Nature, embodies the life of the region. The energy of his breath enters the poem and the actions of the city's inhabitants; he unifies all space and even integrates the inanimate with the animate. Within this unity, forces interact as freely as they reciprocate in Whitehead's cosmos. The language and river which flow throughout the region both supply resources and obtain their substance from the area. Final unity is achieved once thoughts become people, and ideas are perceived through things. Thus, failure to experience harmony with nature is the fault of the

inhabitants, not the limits of the cosmos: Paterson is introduced as a land of unrealized possibilities.

Never discounting the mind, Williams yet denies its supernatural powers when he identifies its actions with observable forces in nature. The reason one can locate ideas in things is because the same force informs both processes--natural phenomena and thought. So identified, the descriptive passage--

Jostled as are the waters approaching
the brink, his thoughts
interlace, repel and cut under,
rise rock-thwarted and turn aside
but forever strain forward--or strike
an eddy and whirl, marked by a
leaf or curdy spume, seeming
to forget.
Retake later the advance and
are replaced by succeeding hordes
pushing forward--they coalesce now
glass-smooth with their swiftness,
quiet or seem to quiet as at the close
they leap to the conclusion and
fall, fall in air! as if
floating, relieved of their weight,
split apart, ribbons; dazed, drunk
with the catastrophe of the descent
floating unsupported
to hit the rocks: to a thunder,
as if lightning had struck

(P, 7-8)

is more than simile. It is a direct comparison between two parallel forces of the natural world. Hence, the scene of the river need not be considered an objective correlative for thought but rather as a similar, concurrent process more analogous than symbolic or

metaphoric. Williams suggests that nature and man are reciprocally related and may develop together.

Nature, however, dominates this relationship. Man must adjust himself to his immediate environment to achieve harmony and congruence. The problem, of course, is that provincialism may result. As Williams confesses about Daniel Boone and other early explorers of America,

. . . they abandoned touch with those along the coast, and their established references, and made contact with the intrinsic elements of an as yet unrealized material of which the new country was made. It is the actuality of their lives, and its tragic effect on them, which is illuminating.

All of them, when they did come back to the settlements, found themselves strangers. . . .

It was a curious anomaly. They in themselves had achieved a culture, an adjustment to the conditions about them, which was of the first order, and which at the same time, oddly cut them off from the others.

(SE, 140-41)

Williams goes on to explain in this essay on "The American Background" that the source of the difference between the two groups was the faulty values of those of the coastline settlement. They apparently had initiated a culture out of harmony with the elemental nature of the new world. The solution for the American culture, Williams suggests, is to return to its elemental sources. Williams does not solve the problem of transcultural communications, but he does grapple in Paterson with the aesthetic problem of being true to both an elemental nature and a

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culture divorced from its sources. The task for the imagination is somehow to reconcile dual loyalties within the poem.

Paterson, therefore, must be read as a design of multiple perspectives. Its unity is one of space--an environment comprised of the elemental perspective, the local culture, and the harmony or dissonance between the two. In a mediating role stands the poet, sometimes transcending the provincialism of his culture, sometimes victimized by it. Above all stands the reader, identifying with varying perspectives, but also aware of the unity of the whole. The poem results from this complex of relationships, internally consistent, externally related, extended through time from historical events through the present and in anticipation of the future. Rather than jolting juxtapositions, many of the patterns may be viewed as certain events viewed from the perspective of a dissimilar event, "the aspect of B from A" and "of the essence of A." Hence, although there is not the organic form of a growing tree, there is the organic cohesiveness of "prehensive unity."

Alan Ostrom recognizes the central importance of this organic order in much of Williams' work, although he does not make the connection with Whitehead. Speaking of "The Red Wheelbarrow," Ostrom observes:

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In terms of both his actual world and the poem's world that wheelbarrow is indispensable if their wholeness is to be kept; remove it, and you remove one point where the human, the natural, and the mechanical worlds meet in harmony, where the wheelbarrow, its implied user, the chickens, and possibly even the rain have that quality-in-common for which Williams (like ourselves) is always seeking that he may at last form a paradigm--minute, perhaps, but of infinite worth--of the true order of our world. Remove the wheelbarrow, he says, and you remove one of the few measurable, knowable points of reference and fragment the whole into illusorily separated orders.²³

Clearly, then, Whitehead's pattern of organic wholeness informs Williams' poetic design. In attempting to understand the design of the actual, Whitehead articulates in philosophical terms what Williams seeks in aesthetic form. This concern with the actual is what Williams feels he shares with Kenneth Burke when he writes to him in 1947:

. . . what seems to be the basic reason for our interest, our sustained interest, in each other which has never been explicit--a desire on both our parts to find some basis for avoiding the tyranny of the symbolic without sacrificing fullness of imagery.

.
My whole intent, in my life, has been, as with you, to find a basis (in poetry, in my case) for the actual. It isn't a difficult problem to solve theoretically. All one has to do is to discover new laws of the metric and use them. That's objective enough and little different from the practical deductions of an Edison. The difficulty lies in the practice. . . . I am trying in Paterson to work out the problems of a new prosody--but I am doing it by writing poetry rather than "logic" which might castrate me, since I have no ability in that medium (of logic). There is no reason, besides, why I should do otherwise than I am doing. That is, if I succeed, the effect will be the same no matter what the approach.

(SL, 257-58)

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To diagram the actual is a matter of demonstration for Williams, not a process of teaching. Based upon an intuitive knowledge of what Whitehead describes, Williams' poetry reveals rather than tells and thus convinces some readers that it is anti-intellectual--although that is the opposite of Williams' intention. As Williams says,

We must know. We must say what we know. We will not be defeated or bemused. But the artist not only knows and reveals, he proves the reliability of his contentions by his works. As with geometry this is the basis of art; the diagram is not didactic. It is fact, proof of the existence of creative man--signed by the creator.

(SE, 247)

Thus, poetry is a cultural process which lifts all aspects of reality into a design of wholeness and order because it faithfully reproduces the actuality of its immediate environment.

It has to be where it arises, or everything related to the life there ceases. It isn't a thing: it's an act. If it stands still, it is dead. It is the realization of the qualities of a place in relation to the life which occupies it; embracing everything involved, climate, geographic position, relative size, history, other cultures--as well as the character of its sands, flowers, minerals and the condition of knowledge within its borders. It is the act of lifting there things into an ordered and utilized whole which is culture. It isn't something left over afterward. That is the record only. The act is the thing. It can't be escaped or avoided if life is to go on. It is in the fullest sense that which is fit.

(SE, 157)

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Finally, because he assumes a process similar to that of prehensive unity, the local poet can make contact with readers outside of his private experiences. This contact with others and with general truths is possible because his world exists along with--and thus shares with--their world, and also because the process of conscrucence is the same for both. It is for these reasons that Williams can claim:

Being an artist I can produce, if I am able, universals of general applicability. If I succeed in keeping myself objective enough, sensual enough, I can produce the factors, the concretions of materials by which others shall understand and so be let to use--that they may the better see, touch, taste, enjoy their own world differing as it may from mine. By mine, they, different, can be discovered to be the same as I, and, thrown into contrast, will see the implications of a general enjoyment through me.

That--all my life I have striven to emphasize it--is what is meant by the universality of the local. From me where I stand to them where they stand in their here and now--where I cannot be--I do in spite of that arrive! through their work which complements their own, each sensually local.

(SE, 198)

And so Williams' canvas is spread wide, extended along the flattened plane of immediate experience rather than reaching up the verticle scale toward an inaccessible, transcendent value.

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To say that Williams works on a horizontal plane is not to assume that he discards all transcendent values.

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Williams' is not an accidental world. His is a world governed by a telos located on the same plane as are daily activities. Wonders and marvels exist for him in the immediate world.

In Adventures in Ideas, Whitehead identifies four main doctrines prevalent in his time concerning the Laws of Nature. The three major categories are the law as immanent, as imposed, and as an observed order of succession--in other words, law as mere description. The last law is the development of the doctrine of mere description into a very loose doctrine of conventional interpretation (AI, 142). Whitehead favors the doctrine of immanence, but with certain reservations.

The Law as immanent assumes the essential interdependence of things. Not superficially descriptive, this law seeks explanations of order based upon the essences of real things in their mutual relations to each other. It thus displays a real but changing order, since the laws must change as the things constituting nature change. Basically a doctrine of evolution, it yet insists that both laws and nature change--not that the universe evolves according to fixed, eternal laws regulating its behavior. Whitehead cautions that this doctrine is untenable unless it can be backed by a plausible metaphysical doctrine "according to which the characters of the relevant things in nature are the

outcome of their interconnections, and their interconnections are the outcome of their characters. This involves some doctrine of Internal Relations" (AI, 144).

Whitehead is implicitly critical of a doctrine of Imposition which places control solely in External Relations. He admits, however, that belief in a transcendent order inspired modern science, since an unqualified belief in the law of immanence precludes the predictability of scientific laws. For even before Descartes, "it was the implicit belief in some form of imposition, with its consequent exactness, that convinced educated men that there was something to find out" (AI, 145). Thus, apart from some notion of an imposed law, the doctrine of immanence provides absolutely no reason why the universe should not be steadily relapsing into lawless chaos. The solution, Whitehead suggests, lies in allowing the doctrine of immanence to include "a stable actuality whose mutual implication with the remainder of things secures an inevitable trend towards order. The Platonic 'persuasion' is required" (AI, 147).

In discussing the Law as mere description, Whitehead admits that there is "an attractive simplicity about this doctrine" in that it evades metaphysical and religious difficulties. The Positivist position, this doctrine assumes only "that we have direct acquaintance with a succession of things observed." This acquaintance

is cumulative and comparative since it includes not only the "distinct observations of distinct things in succession" but also "a comparative knowledge of the successive observations." Thus, "'understanding' means 'simplicity of description'" (AI, 147-48). Whitehead considers conventional interpretation to extend mere description into its most unsatisfactory form. Rejecting the rational dialectic inherited from the Scholastics, direct observation often leads to vagrant speculation. Thus, both the old and new ages tend to reach the same limitations: "They canalize thought and observation within predetermined limits, based upon inadequate metaphysical assumptions dogmatically assumed" (AI, 151). Whitehead concludes that the modern assumptions differ from older assumptions, but not wholly "for the better. They exclude from rationalistic thought more of the final values of existence" because they circumscribe reason "by reducing its topics to triviality, for example, to bare *sensa* and to tautologies." Then, it frees itself from criticism "by dogmatically handing over the remainder of experience to an animal faith or a religious mysticism, incapable of rationalization" (AI, 151). Whitehead suggests that philosophy must enlarge itself to embrace all the values and speculations of mankind, not those available through reason and/or direct observation alone.

Whitehead's protests against the limiting doctrines of the past calls for a diagram of integration. He seeks especially a new doctrine which can balance the extremes of transcendence and immanence. The possibility for such a reconciliation derives from a modification of Plato, he claims, but dates from the theologians of Alexandria:

They considered the general question, now the primordial Being, who is the source of the inevitable recurrence of the world towards order, shares his nature with the world. In some sense he is a component in the natures of all fugitive things. Thus, an understanding of the nature of temporal things involves a comprehension of the immanence of the Eternal Being. This doctrine effects an important reconciliation between the doctrines of Imposed Law and Immanent Law. For, with this doctrine, the necessity of the trend towards order does not arise from the imposed will of a transcendent God. It arises from the fact that the existents in nature are sharing in the nature of the immanent God.

(AI, 166)

Critics like Joseph Riddel place Williams' work sometimes in the doctrine of immanence (when meanings are apparent), but primarily in the doctrine of mere description, which is totally temporal and unpredictable. However, I find that the tone of Williams' opus and his claim that he believes "that all the old academic values hold today as always" (SL, 286) suggest instead his conviction that basic values are permanent and comprehensible. It is for this reason that I place Williams with Whitehead, especially in the sense that he locates what have

traditionally been regarded as transcendent, eternal values in present actuality. There is no sense that Williams creates these values inductively; he lays claim on eternal values identifiable in the past. Yet, these values are very immanent and arise from the present occasion.

Whitehead's ideas on change, endurance and eternality are helpful in illuminating Williams' treatment of these values. According to Whitehead, change is obvious only as one regards the separative and modal characters of events. The components of an event are discreet only when abstract thought isolates them in space. Similarly, the event is limited to a single concrescence only when it is viewed in its aspect of time-space. Its extension exists through its endurance, through the ingression of eternal objects, through the community of a nexus, and through the determinancy of causal efficacy.

Whitehead's term endurance refers to the stability achieved through repetition. We must remember that for Whitehead, the event (actual occasion/actual entity) is the minimal "stuff" of actuality. This stuff is not material in the traditional sense, but rather the smallest unit of a meaningful relationship. Destroying the ultimate dualism by beginning with the premise that "there is no absolute gap between 'living' and 'non-living' societies," Whitehead measures life in terms of

the importance of novelty in an entity's existence. What has been termed inorganic is therefore that part of actuality for which novelty is "unimportant" (PR, 156). The higher organisms, such as man, demonstrate a high degree of novelty and change. But an object such as a stone has great endurance because the opportunity for novelty is unimportant and the object thus tends to repeat itself. Thus, endurance is best defined as "reiteration" of a pattern's "succession of contrasts," comparable to the technical notion of "vibration" in physics (SMW, 193). Thus, although Whitehead notes in poetry a preoccupation with change and endurance (Shelley with the former, Wordsworth with the latter--SMW, 125-26), he sees change as a positive value, indicative of life. He turns to eternality as a concept more significant to one's establishment of a sense of permanence.

Eternal objects are the universal, abstract qualities, such as color, shape, sound and scent, which are used to construct patterns. Whitehead solves the conflict between change and permanence in his philosophy of organic mechanism by locating eternal, changeless qualities in particular, changing events. Because eternal objects relate to each other, the presence of one eternal quality in a particular occasion indirectly relates that occasion to the total realm of eternal values. Furthermore, the only way to claim an eternal value is to have it ingress into a particular event. In Whitehead's words,

By "abstract" I mean that what an eternal object is in itself--that is to say, its essence--is comprehensible without reference to some one particular occasion or experience. To be abstract is to transcend particular concrete occasions of actual happening. But to transcend an actual occasion does not mean being disconnected from it. On the contrary, I hold that each eternal object has its own proper connection with each such occasion, which I term its mode of ingression into that occasion. Thus an eternal object is to be comprehended by acquaintance with (i) its particular individuality, (ii) its general relationships to other eternal objects as apt for realization in actual occasions, and (iii) the general principle which expresses its ingression in particular actual occasions.⁴⁵

Thus, the particular resides with the universal because of the penetration of universal qualities into particular events.

Thus far we have considered the possibility for permanence in a single event. It remains to explore the possibilities for unity among events. If Williams understood his Whitehead, he was reminded in Science and the Modern World that a primary organism has external as well as internal relations, and has to do "with all that there is, and in particular with all other events" (SMW, 103). Emerging as "some particular pattern as grasped in the unity of a real event," the primary organism cannot exist in isolation. Its various aspects are grasped in the patterns of other events,

. . . whereby those other events receive a modification, or partial determination. There is thus an intrinsic and an extrinsic reality of an event, namely, the event as in its own prehension, and the event as in the prehension of other events.

The concept of an organism includes, therefore,
the concept of the interaction of organisms.

(SMW, 103)

This fact of togetherness among actual events Whitehead elsewhere calls a nexus, plural form written $\text{nex}\bar{\text{us}}$ (PR, 30). When this togetherness is an extension of the same occasion through successive reiteration, a nexus is a single, enduring object, as discussed above. A togetherness of separate entities comprises a society, formed from disparate but related events.

The most intricate form of external relationship is that of causal efficacy. Whitehead identifies presentational immediacy and causal efficacy as our "two sources of information about the external world" (S, 30). Presentational immediacy is what we commonly call perception, defined primarily through sense-data. This information, Whitehead claims, is actually the more abstract of the two sources but has inaccurately assumed the reputation of basic reality in an empirical system. It leads to the "futile 'solipsism of the present moment'--or, in other words, utter scepticism." In a doctrine such as his which claims direct experience of an external world, one is driven to the second source of information:

. . . if you consistently maintain such direct individual experience, you will be driven in your philosophical construction to a conception of the world as an interplay of functional activity whereby each concrete individual thing

arises from its determinate relativity to the settled world of other concrete individuals, at least so far as the world is past and settled.

(S, 29)

This emergence of entities and occasions from their determinate entities and occasions Whitehead calls causal efficacy. It provides the continuity of one event's determinant influence upon the next event.

In defining causal efficacy, Whitehead indicates the reason man tends to think of change in terms of fleeting time. Cause and effect are popularly related to time, since "the immediate present has to conform to what the past is for it." Yet, Whitehead reminds us, the mere lapse of time is an abstraction from the more concrete relatedness of 'conformation'" (S, 36).

. . . succession is not pure succession: it is the derivation of state from state, with the later state exhibiting conformity to the antecedent. Time in the concrete is the conformation of state to state, the later to the earlier; and the pure succession is an abstraction from the irreversible relationship of settled past to derivative present.

(S, 35)

We might conclude that thoughts about change in the concrete are not as threatening as are thoughts about the racing of time as pure succession. Change in the specific suggests novelty and thus life. Only time in the abstract suggests expiration and loss.

Like Whitehead, Williams seems little concerned with change per se. Rather, he captures the eternality

of form, the nexūs of related entities, the causal efficacy of events, and the endurance of stable entities. The qualities Whitehead identifies as eternal are the abstractions of color, shape, sound and scent primarily. Influenced by the visual arts of his time, Williams favors shape among these. The most obvious evidence of this is his advice "To a Solitary Disciple," (CEP, 167), where converging lines mark out a variety of forms more noteworthy than the changing colors. In this poem, Williams also demonstrates his use of prehensions by graphically describing the tendency for lines to reach out to related points. The various entities of the scene--moon, building, sky--form a nexus, or community; and indeed, spacial relations define entities in non-traditional terms by uniting spaces in groups other than the more obvious material substances of moon, steeple and sky. The spaces overlap and reveal new entities growing out of superimposed events.

The causal efficacy of events is evident throughout Paterson. For example, the idyl of Corydon and Phyllis in the fourth book reveals the determinate forces influencing current occasions. One discovers an emerging pattern of cause and effect as the poet discloses Phyllis' heritage and her present relationship with Paterson. Mere description would not speculate beyond the concrete evidence of immediate events, cumulative

and comparative though they might be. Williams probes for explanations for Phyllis' present behavior in the continuing influence of a drunken father, a childhood spent in the back country, and a present desire to appear cosmopolitan and independent. Furthermore, he depends upon generalized principles of cause and effect, and makes Phyllis representative of all the "--girls from / families that have decayed and / taken to the hills" (P, 11-12). Throughout the narrative there is that sense of an event's anticipation of its successor and its conformity to its past which Whitehead describes. In its evolving form, this determinacy fits the description of organic mechanism.

The quality of endurance within Williams' work, especially within Paterson, comes not only from the presence of enduring inanimate objects and persisting personalities (nexūs), but also from emerging aesthetic designs. The repetition of images of flowers, dogs, hair, falls, voices, flames, etc., creates a rich tapestry of recurrence and the unity of motifs. To the extent that the entities and occasions vary, these motifs reveal the life of the poem. To the extent that the same elements recur, they help to stabilize the total occasion of the work.

The law which orders Williams' poetic universe is thus not a law of chance or of mere description but

rather a law of an evolving world, directed internally through the law of immanence and yet made predictable and universal through a reliance upon the eternal objects of shape, color, and sensuous qualities. Furthermore, the immanence of that world is controlled by the doctrine of Internal Relations which Whitehead requires, wherein "the characters of the relevant things . . . are the outcome of their interconnections, and their interconnections are the outcome of their character" (AI, 144). The concrete particulars are not sufficient unto themselves through their cumulative effect but rather are displayed as participants in a universal drama of meaning through prehensive unity. Far from the unity of logical thought, this unity is clearly that of aesthetic design which is firmly grounded in actuality. Thus, an understanding of life's actuality reveals the design of the poem. But more ideally, a reading of the poem should engage the reader in the design of the actual.

iv

To summarize the metaphysics of Whitehead in Science and the Modern World is to define reality centrifugally from the particular to the universal and then to double back into an endless cycle. This, I believe, is also the pattern of development Williams follows throughout his opus, and the specific design of Paterson.

Whitehead initiates his argument in praise of the power of poetry to render a concrete experience:

Remembering the poetic rendering of our concrete experience, we see at once that the element of value, of being valuable, of having value, of being an end in itself, of being something which is for its own sake, must not be omitted in any account of an event as the most concrete something. "Value" is the word I use for the intrinsic reality of an event. Value is an element which permeates through and through the poetic view of nature.

(SMW, 93)

This value, he reminds us, is possible only through the limitation of the single event, isolated though it may seem from other events or from statements of value given in abstract terms. For,

. . . there is no such thing as mere value. Value is the outcome of limitation. The definite finite entity is the selected mode which is the shaping of attainment. The mere fusion of all that there is would be the nonentity of indefiniteness. The salvation of reality is its obstinate, irreducible, matter-of-fact entities, which are limited to be no other than themselves. Neither science, nor art, nor creative action can tear away from obstinate, irreducible, limited facts.

(SMW, 93)

Hence, it is the very condition of limitation which makes events, objects and lives valuable; for without limits, nothing would have a personal identity.

However, in addition to the irreducible nature of the single, limited event, there is the prehensive interaction among all parts of the environment. Hence, an event

. . . is not self-sufficient. The aspects of all things enter into its very nature. It is only itself as drawing together into its own limitation the larger whole in which it finds itself. Conversely, it is only itself by lending its aspects to this same environment in which it finds itself. The problem of evolution is the development of enduring harmonies of enduring shapes of value, which merge into higher attainments of things beyond themselves.

(SMW, 94)

Whitehead insists that although aesthetic attainment of harmonies and patterns may be temporary and may be limited to single expressions, yet such an attainment is valuable because it is an attempt at order and pattern. That nature is orderly is a matter of faith with Whitehead, but he would seem to admit that that order is at times hidden from view.

Ultimately, value is not dependent upon the attainment of aesthetic successes, but is a direct result of the relationship of eternal objects to the single event. This relationship insures access to the universal through its presence in the particular since

. . . the aboriginal data in terms of which the pattern weaves itself are the aspects of shapes, of sense-objects, and of other eternal objects whose self-identity is not dependent on the flux of things. Wherever such objects have ingression into the general flux, they interpret events, each to the other. They are here in the perceiver; but, as perceived by him, they convey for him something of the total flux which is beyond himself. The subject-object relation takes its origin in the double role of these eternal objects. They are modifications of the subject, but only in their character of conveying aspects of other subjects

in the community of the universe. Thus no individual subject can have independent reality, since it is a prehension of limited aspects of subjects other than itself.

(SMW, 151)

In short, the significance of things goes beyond the mere value of limited existence. The value of the thing is the fact that it is one of many things. The relationship which each thing has with other objects exhibits an aesthetic pattern, which establishes its enduring value. The ultimate value, however, is the presence of eternal objects within the thing--eternal objects which exist outside the flux of time.

It is interesting that although Whitehead praises the value of actual entities, he criticizes the present age for its materialistic greed. He would remind society of the difference between dynamic entities and objects of simple location. Because its members define matter as static objects rather than as organic wholes, Whitehead finds that society has a distorted and possessive attitude toward things as capital, devoid of aesthetic value. Williams would express this observation as the Puritan fault of misusing things in a selfish rather than a caring manner.

Like Williams, Whitehead also insists that the mechanics of art must change. For Whitehead, this change seems to be primarily a matter of renewal:

An epoch gets saturated by the masterpieces of any one style. Something new must be discovered. The human being wanders on. Yet there is a balance in things. Mere change before the attainment of adequacy of achievement, either in quality of output, is destructive of greatness. But the importance of a living art, which moves on and yet leaves its permanent mark, can hardly be exaggerated.

(SMW, 202)

Williams limits this change to the peculiarities of the period of time. Of Paterson, he writes,

In a word I believe that all the old academic values hold today as always. Basically I am a most conventional person. But the TERMS in which we must parallel the past are entirely new and peculiar to ourselves.

(SL, 286)

Williams seems to develop his personal aesthetic along a path parallel to Whitehead's development. Williams begins with an appreciation for the poetic view of nature and attempts to record his emotions. In the twenties, he probes the subconscious or the serendipitous in search of authentic materials. Then, during his Objectivist period, he limits his portrayal of actuality to its basic entities, events and occasions. The fact that things appear in a semi-isolated, unemotional, unexplained setting suggests superficially that Williams has lost interest in universal values. Yet, the limited thing exists as essential value, Whitehead would remind us, precisely because it is concrete and specific; and furthermore, it has potential for

prehensive unity with other objects and present access to eternal values. Throughout this period, Williams allows the human subject to become a component of the occasion, often through his use of the first person singular in the poem. But even the reader is ultimately a member of the occasion as he participates in the poetic design.

If The Collected Later Poems reveals Williams' experimenting with the processes of the mind, Paterson shows the poet progressing from the specific to the general, from the local to the universal. Book Five testifies to the poet's success and prophecies a new ease in uniting the limits of experience. I see Books One through Four of Paterson as preparation for the poet to deal more explicitly with universal values which are effectively grounded in the particulars of immediate experience.

Benjamin Sankey claims that the Preface to Book One seems to have been composed quite late in the writing of Paterson (Sankey, p. 29). As a fairly reliable judgment of intention, this preface proclaims a central purpose of the poem to be that of starting with particulars, which will then be made general. Entire studies have been devoted to identifying this doctrine as one of Williams' patterns and critical theories, but no one seems to have identified the writing of Paterson as the

process whereby Williams shifted his attention from the controlled clarity of the particular to a more relaxed treatment of the universal within the particular.

Thus, Paterson begins at the beginning of the water cycle. "[L]ifted as air, boated, multicolored, a / wash of seas--", the water sprayed up from the dashing waves of the ocean is carried inland,

divided as the dew,
floating mists, to be rained down and
regathered into a river that flows
and encircles:

(P, 5)

Drawing himself and his water down "from mathematics to particulars," the poet hence begins with the smallest units of actuality, located in the present. His use of the word mathematics recalls Whitehead's identification of abstraction with numbers. Yet, like Whitehead, he promises to trace the progress of the particular drop of water to its ultimate unity with all other drops in the ocean.

Books One and Two satisfy the poet's initial commitment to the particulars of a single location and a selection of concrete objects. Already, however, individual entities cluster into groups. These groupings, or societies (Whitehead's nexūs) reveal the natural tendency for items to organize themselves into patterns of similarity and influence. Loosely connected along

the lines of the eternal world, sections of the poem and the poem as a whole form the "basket" or "gathering up" proposed in the poem's plan (P, 2). Within that general space, however, other patterns emerge. Williams had suggested this sense of relation as early as Kora when he noted,

The features of a landscape take their position in the imagination and are related more to their own kind there than to the country and season which has held them hitherto as a basket holds vegetables mixed with fruit.

(I, 20)

This intuitive grasp of relations emerging within set boundaries of space and time informs Williams' method of composition. Writing to James Laughlin in 1943 about Paterson, he protested against the concept of order as security and relief. Comparing himself with Wallace Stevens, he observed,

If Stevens speaks of Parts of a World, this is definitely Parts of a Greater World--a looser, wider world where "order" is a servant not a master. Order is what is discovered after the fact, . . .

(SL, 214)

Although the poet observes unities among entities from the first, it is not until Book Four, "The Run to the Sea," that he proves that his river ultimately does flow into the universal sea of love, blood, time, origin and death. Williams seems to have begun this book as a

parody of the idyl, of a city's attempt to be cosmopolitan and universal, and of Corydon. In speaking of "the charming old Lesbian and the little nurse (the female Paterson)" who got him in trouble with his readers, Williams confesses,

I like the old gal of whom I spoke, she was at least cultured and not without feeling of a distinguished sort. I don't mind telling you that I started writing of her in a satiric mood--but she won me quite over. I ended by feeling admiration for her and real regret at her defeat.

(SL, 301-02)

The inspiration for this incident and the preoccupation with the local's nourishment of the general seems to date to a time before any of Paterson was published, if we can apply a letter written in 1944 to Horace Gregory to this book. In that letter, Williams speaks of the "flow between the man of intellect and the formally trained intelligence" as a direct interchange "which perhaps the homosexuals have presaged in their pathetic manner." One cannot help but think of Phyllis as the representative of the local Ramapo and Corydon as the cosmopolitan city as one reads the following lines:

The interchange from the local toward the general, and the refreshing of the general from the local . . . is what we are after: freely, warmly, with mutual acknowledgment and even eagerness. The homosexuals at least know what it is all about, even if they distort it in the

familiar fashion. But they have the particular in mind, they apply their understanding in a broad symbolism. . . .

Besides, just as the city depends, literally, both for its men and its materials on the country, so general ideas, if they are to be living and valid, to some extent depend (at least for their testing) on local cultures. It is in the wide range of the local only that the general can be tested for its one unique quality, its universality. The flow must originate from the local to the general as a river to the sea and then back to the local from the sea in rain. But more particularly, since we are speaking of the arts (as they represent culture), and still more particularly of the poet, locally situated, and only the poet who is the active agent in their interchange.

(SL, 225)

Williams continues the argument of this letter by stressing the need for the poet to live locally and to apply his senses locally to particulars. He censures Eliot for refusing to honor this responsibility to his own local and furthermore, in influencing Americans toward expatriatism. Williams does, however, admit the possibility of a blockage in a poet whereby "the head, the intellect, on which he rightfully calls for direction, condemns him" and "fails to leave a friendly channel open for me" (SL, 255-56).

This blockage is what seems to have happened in the relationships of Book Four. First, it is questionable whether the relation between Phyllis and Corydon is given "freely, warmly," and "with mutual acknowledgment and even eagerness." Primarily, however, the doctor-poet fails as the "active agent," except possibly to the degree that he

encourages Phyllis to continue her relationship with Corydon as a result of their own unculminated relations.

It is perhaps the failure of the relationships in the idyl which forces the poet to pursue his own journey to the sea. Arriving there, he confronts a paradox:

I warn you, the sea is not our home.
the sea is not our home

The sea is our home whither all rivers
(wither) run .

(P, 201)

The refrain of warning against the sea points up the danger of the appealing siren call of the sea, whereby the individual is tempted to drown in the universality of general truths or the total loss of identity which merger would require. It is the desire of Empedocles to plunge into Mr. Etna, or the "nonentity of indefiniteness" Whitehead finds intolerable. Yet, in another sense, the sea is our home in that it is the origin of universal truths and the ultimate conclusion of every particular. The action of the poet-doctor demonstrates a proper regard for this ocean of truth. In the original quest, he must travel the stream from particular to universal in order to insure the connection. Once he has experienced this path, he must emerge from the sea to pursue other strands along the same particular-universal

continuum. Once traveled, however, the path is much more compact and ultimately becomes cyclic. Thus, in Book Five, there need be no literal journey from source to ocean, but residence in the eternal present,

The (self) direction has been changed
 the serpent
 its tail in its mouth
 "the river has returned to its beginnings"
 and backward
 (and forward)
 it tortures itself within me
 until time has been washed finally under:
 and "I knew all (or enough)
 it became me .

(P, 233)

Thus, the baptism initiated in "The Wanderer" as a union of the individual with his environment is culminated only through Paterson as the union of the particular with the universal.

It is, I believe, this journey to the sea which allows the poet to deal more openly with universal values in his final works. In the Journey to Love which follows, he moves easily between sparrows and poetic truths, a woman carrying marigolds and messages from another world, a pink locust and the virtue of persistence, an asphodel and love. Avoiding both the sterility of mere objects and the slipperiness of abstract qualities, he manages to convey the worth of universal truths through the chiseled compactness of concrete imagery and economical expression.

Furthermore, he achieves an effective reconciliation between highly personal poems and aesthetic distance.

Because of his shift toward the abstract, Williams emphasizes the line and measure that are so central to mathematics and other abstract arts in the works of the period from Paterson on. This emphasis upon verse form is not a turning away from things but rather a concern with locating eternal values--with measuring between things. For although the mechanics of measurement may change, the fact that pattern and measurement are possible is an old and changeless, academic value.

The poetic relation between abstraction and form thus justifies the poet's preoccupation with formal design as a means of expressing the actual. For "if," Williams writes to Horace Gregory in 1944,

. . . art is a transference--for psychic relief--from the actual to the formal, and if this can only be achieved by invention, by rediscovery, by reassertion by the intelligence and the emotions in any and every age--and if the grand aspect of this living drive is, when it occurs, a culture, then, I say, our chief occupation as artists, singly and jointly, should be the clarification of form, new alignments, in our own language and culture.

(SL, 226)

Thus, in speaking of art as an imitation of Nature, Williams emphasizes the process of nature. Art is not a mere copy of individual forms, for these change, no matter how enduring they may be for a time. But the

process--the need for measurement--in art and nature remains the same. Hence, in the kinetic structure of the form, the enduring pattern of the actual may also be achieved. This claim for rhythm as a mode through which to achieve the unity of reality intrigues Williams in an early essay, "Speech Rhythm," where he argues:

No action, no creative action is complete but a period from a greater action going in rhythmic course, i.e., an Odyssey, is rightly considered not an isolated unit but a wave of a series from hollow through crest to hollow. No part in its excellence but partakes of the essential nature of the whole.

This is the conception of the action that I want.

In the other direction, inward: Imagination creates an image, point by point, piece by piece, segment by segment--into a whole, living. But each part as it plays into its neighbor, each segment into its neighbor segment and every part into every other, causing the whole--exists naturally in rhythm, and as there are waves there are tides and as there are ridges in the sand there are bars after bars. . . .

Each piece of work, rhythmic in whole, is then in essence an assembly of tides, waves, ripples--in short, of greater and lesser rhythmic particles regularly repeated or destroyed. . . .

For practical purposes and for me the unit is of a convenient length, such as may be appreciated at one stroke of the attention. It must not be so small as not to tax the attention, that is, to hold it; it should be in good scale as the architects say. . . .

Here then, is the touchstone of it all: though the sounds of speech, i.e. words, letters, poetic lines, what not, convey the rhythm to a passion yet the rhythm itself is a thing apart and no sound. Upon this the wordy passions string sounds as they strain toward the perfect image. . . .²⁴

Williams' treatment of rhythm and of the poetic line is almost mystical at times. Clearly, he feels that

the rhythm of poetry is not something imposed, forcing order; rhythm cannot be designated arbitrarily. It must reflect the structure of reality--an order comparable to Whitehead's organic mechanism.

v

Williams confessed that it was John Dewey who first informed him that the local is the universal. Dewey and Whitehead agreed upon many points, especially in their insistence that one begin with local, particular, concrete things and experiences. Where they differed was the degree to which they transcended local evidence to claim knowledge regarding universal truths. Dewey insisted that one remain in the realm of the particular, which provides our only knowledge through description. Whitehead fuses the universal into the particular in such a way that he claims universal knowledge and feels free to design a total cosmology.

In an article on Whitehead, Dewey admits that he and Whitehead begin with the same premise.²⁵ They share the fundamental assumption that experience is a manifestation of the energies of the total organism, that these energies are in such intimate relation with the rest of nature that the traits of experience provide clues to a generalized description of nature, and that what is discovered about the rest of nature illuminates one's understanding of what is obscure and ambiguous in

immediate experience. In short, Dewey claims that he and Whitehead share a similar interpretation of a relation between the particular to the general.

The type of experience to which both refer is, according to Dewey, more inclusive than the activities of the sense-organs--more inclusive than mere sensations. Furthermore, there is a total interpenetration, both would agree, of the individual with his world. In Whitehead's terms,

. . . we cannot tell with what molecules the body ends and the external world begins. The truth is that the brain is continuous with the body, and the body is continuous with the rest of the natural world. Human experience is an act of self-origination including the whole of nature, limited to the perspective of a focal region, located within the body, but not necessarily persisting in any fixed coordination with a definite part of the brain.²⁶

Dewey feels that Whitehead's original denial of "the bifurcation of nature" had its source in Whitehead's reflections about the new science. Hence, "the genius of Whitehead exhibited in the earliness of his perception that the new mathematical physics [in contrast to Newtonian physics] did away with the supposedly scientific foundations, upon the physical side, which gave obvious point to the separation."²⁷ However, Dewey insists that this denial has its completion in the reconciliation of specialized human experience with the total, general character of physical nature. It is because of this

relationship that particular experiences may be used to interpret the full significance of the discoveries of physical science. Hence, Dewey isolates such passages as, "An occasion of experience which includes a human mentality is an extreme instance, at one end of the scale, of those happenings which constitute nature"; and, "It is a false dichotomy to think of Nature and man. Mankind is that factor in Nature which exhibits in its most intense form the plasticity of nature."²⁸

The implications of eliminating the metaphysical dualism of physical-mental, material-ideal, and object-subject are paramount to Dewey. They authorize philosophers "to use the traits of immediate experience as clues for interpreting our observations of non-human and non-animate nature."²⁹ Conversely, they grant authority "to carry over the main conclusions of physical science into explanation and description of mysterious and inexplicable traits of experience marked by 'consciousness.'"³⁰ Once again, the significance for Dewey is authority to marry the particular with the general.

What troubles Dewey most about Whitehead is his split focus between particulars and abstractions. Dewey approaches this issue by questioning the task and office of philosophy, and quotes Whitehead as stating that the business of philosophy is to frame descriptive generalizations so as to form

. . . a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted. Here "interpretation" means that each element shall have the character of a particular instance of the general scheme.³¹

Dewey protests that this claim is more than a mere statement that the different portions of a philosophical scheme must hang together. Instead, it seems to be a prediction of an ultimate system. As such, philosophy becomes prescriptive rather than descriptive; it proceeds from the general to the specific. Furthermore, it suggests that general characters or essences constitute existences in the system of an abstract pattern used to interpret particular existences. This, Dewey says, implies "that this entire strain of thought substitutes abstract logical connectedness for the concrete temporal connectedness upon which I have based my interpretation of Whitehead's system."³²

Dewey's point seems to be that Whitehead at times implies that one can know on the level of abstraction. Dewey, of course, would deny such knowledge; only particular experience is accessible. Particular knowledge then gives entry into the essence (not existence) of abstract knowledge and reveals lines of relation. These are but functional accounts of experience ("clews") used to predict consequences, not to describe the content of universal and essential characters. In brief, he feels that Whitehead subjects his conclusions to a combination

of considerations too exclusively derived from a combination of mathematics. The fault suggests a return from the general to the specific--an application of what can be learned from the physical sciences (universal truths) as a means of interpreting the feelings, ideas, emotions and enjoyments of human experience. Dewey insists that all which can be concluded is "correspondence of functions."³³

Because of Williams' deep antipathy for philosophy and his insistence upon poetic form, it is easy to conclude that he belongs with Dewey and the champions of mere description. However, with a poet who seeks the embodiment rather than statement of knowledge, one must identify his assumptions to determine his stance. In the structure and imagery of Paterson, I have tried to show Williams' journey from the particular to the universal, and his assumption that the particular inevitably leads to the general. Furthermore, as Williams' letter to Horace Gregory reveals, Williams believes that the particular (local) is conversely a testing for general ideas, keeping them "living and valid." In this letter, significance is definitely given to those very general ideas Dewey resents, with the emphasis upon an adequate system of checks and balances. For although "the flow must originate from the local to the general as a river to the sea," it likewise will return "to the local from the sea in rain" (SL, 225).

Thus, when Williams proceeds from the particular to the general, he follows both Whitehead and Dewey. It is also true that he refuses to linger in generalities, for "the sea is not our home." Yet, he insists that one can plunge into that sea of generality as long as he returns to the local. He also insists upon a correlation between the mathematical measure and the ultimate significance of the poem, for it is in "the minute organization of the words and their relationships in a composition that the seriousness and value of a work of writing exists--not in the sentiments, ideas, schemes portrayed" (SE, 108). It is as though the reality of the measure (an abstraction) is to define the content of the verse; as though the line is all-sufficient. Thus, abstract measure is just as real as the objects it contains and is indeed essential in ordering reality in a system corresponding to the system of relativity. This, then, is the way that the poem functions as a "field of action."

In relating Williams to Whitehead, we see that Williams indeed has completed the romantic cycle. However, the experience of being in nature and on a level with the object does not require a loss of identity but rather provides a prehensive unity comprised of various perspectives and interpretations. It is therefore not a monistic solution which reunites the poet with his

world and then leaves him comfortably passive and insignificant. Rather, it places him in a position to explore his environment and to discover designs and patterns through his interaction. It is entry into the world of art. The difference between Williams and poets such as Keats and Yeats is the locus of that world; for in Williams, the world of art is always a function of the ordinary world we experience. Hence, poetry is never supersensuous but rather active participation in the actual world. This actuality is perceived intuitively by the poet, recorded formally through his craft, and re-enacted as the reader participates in the poem.

CHAPTER IV

THE ETHIC OF PERSUASION

It would be a grave error to suppose that Williams systematically designed his verse according to carefully constructed principles of science and philosophy. Williams was an artist first and foremost, intuitively seeking an imaginative design. His protests against higher learning are misleading, however, in that Williams was always fascinated by all that he read and heard. And much was in the air in the twenties and thirties regarding science and philosophy as well as the arts as friends congregated in New York City for the Orage writing class, the latest art exhibit, or informal dinners. As Williams admitted in "Seventy Years Deep":

. . . I could attend a literary gathering most any week night and get home without missing an appointment, and on Sundays I could spend the day exchanging thoughts with the "promising" intellectuals of the times.¹

We have no idea of the wealth of information these gatherings discussed, or the many reviews of current

books and studies a man like Williams must have read. Seeking first to justify his interest in local things and then to realize a structure that could be faithful both to the nature of his materials and the demands of his art, Williams seems to have arrived at a position informed by the latest discoveries and theories in science and philosophy. True to his early definition of poetry in those essays which ranted against the misuse of science and philosophy, he created a form which indeed embodied the knowledge of the twentieth century.

Williams' aesthetics and poetics paralleled the methods of science and philosophy primarily in his interest in motion and his treatment of space. Since I have considered energy (motion) and event somewhat in isolation, it is now necessary to interrelate these two concepts as they illuminate Williams' practice and intent. For it is as Williams began to channel energies through the design of Whitehead's event that his technique gained its final distinction.

Williams expressed one of his more fascinating hypotheses about space in a 1932 letter in which he reported to Ezra Pound that he was

. . . playing with a theory that the inexplicitness of modern verse as compared with, let us say, the *Iliad*, and our increasingly difficult music in the verse as compared with the more or less downrightness of their line forms--have been the result of a clearly understandable revolution in poetic attitude.

(SL, 126-27)

That revolution, Williams boldly suggests, may allow us to do away with a separate quality of music in poetry, causing the music of the poem to inhere in the words, and the meaning to exist in the mind of the reader. Thus,

Whereas formerly the music which accompanied the words amplified, certified and released them, today the words we write failing a patent music, have become the music itself, and the understanding of the individual (presumed) is now that which used to be the words.

(SL, 127)

By extending the space of the poem to the reader himself, Williams makes the mind of the reader indispensable. For "Without the word (the man himself) the music (verse as we know it today) is only a melody of sound."

The difficulty of this theory comes with its final statement. "But," Williams claims, "it [the music] is magnificent when it plays about some kind of certitude." To attempt to play about a certitude which exists solely in the mind of the reader assumes an optimistic faith that readers share similar values and beliefs. Such, I believe, is the working premise of Williams' verse.

The certitudes Williams assumes are of two kinds. First, there are the human values of responsibility and caring, of human dignity and worth, and of the beauty and worth of all things. These are the unstated givens

behind the melodic experiments of "To a Poor Old Woman" and "Suzy," for instance. These individual values then extend into a certitude of the interrelationship of all things--into a certitude of order. The nature of this order is not harshly deterministic; rather, it is a system of persuasive influences.

Once again, Whitehead helps us to make this distinction between influence and force, for he sees events organically related by merit of their persuasive powers over each other. Taking Plato as his authority, Whitehead identifies force and persuasion as the two possibilities for interaction between individuals. "The recourse to force . . . is a disclosure of the failure of civilization," while "The creation of the world . . . is the victory of persuasion over force" (AI, 105). Whitehead thus sees the model for human interaction grounded in a natural reverence for separate entities which persuade rather than force each other.

It is this power of persuasion which links energy and event in Williams. We have seen already his distrust of machines or of arbitrary orders which force events against or without their will. Rather, he prefers unleashing natural energies and sensitizing himself to the persuasive powers of objects. Granting each object a power of persuasion leads naturally to the idea of a network of interacting energies whereby parts attract

each other into the limitations of entities or occasions. Finally, the entire environment can be seen as the interpenetration of various organisms into a dynamic whole. Thus, it is the persuasion between the parts which creates the design of the whole.

To admit the fact that so much depends upon an object such as a red wheelbarrow is to acknowledge both its value and its power of attraction or persuasion. Thus, daisies and plums, paper bags and gay wallpaper are important because they are the environment. Williams' is an emerging world not because it produces original creatures or objects, but because it organizes itself into new patterns and designs.

Both Whitehead and Williams share a constructive optimism that aims toward the future. As a poet, Williams has the greater task, for he must stay closer to the confusing concreteness of particularity. Optimism comes easier in the speculative terms of Whitehead's philosophic language. Yet the same spirit and tone inform both.

This spirit can be understood in terms of Whitehead's two categories of conscious experience. He claims that the basis of our primary consciousness of quality is a large generality--a naive, general intuition that "This is important," "That is difficult," "This is lovely" (MT, 4). However, this vagueness "is the despair

of cultivated people. For the generality, when stated, is too obvious to be worth mentioning." Thus

. . . good literature avoids the large philosophic generality which the quality exhibits. It fastens upon the accidental precision which inevitably clothes the qualitative generality. Literature is a curious mixture of tacitly presupposing analysis, and conversely of returning to emphasize explicitly the fundamental emotional importance of our general intuitions.

(MT, 5)

And so literature turns to the second mode of consciousness, that of "matter-of-fact." Matter-of-fact is a form of concentration, of explicitness, of precision. This concentration is generated, however, by that very sense of importance which cannot be stated. "The two notions are antithetical, and require each other," because conscious experience is a "fusion of a large generality with an insistent particularity" (MT, 4).

Williams' concern with language can be partially explained by Whitehead's analysis of this dipolar aspect of consciousness. "Language," Whitehead says,

. . . is always relapsing into the generality of this intermediate stage between animal habit and learned precision. It is always degenerating into philosophic generality, under the guise of words capable of more precise use. Such a lapse is uneducated, because it expresses the obvious. And yet, it is philosophic; because the obvious embodies the permanent importance of variable detail. Literary people object to the vague use of words which are capable of precision.

(MT, 5)

Williams indeed protests the use of generalized words which, in the imagery of Paterson, become coated over with connotations, as

the water weaves its strands, encasing them in
a sort of thick lacquer, lodged under its flow .

(P, 81)

In essays, he praises the way that Stein, Moore and Joyce wash words clean of their generalities and back to precision. He also admires his mother's ability to locate a specific matter of fact in the midst of a conversation of generality. Yet, his quest for a usable language in Paterson is really a search for a means of fusing generality with particularity. For without the quality of importance, matters of fact merely clutter the poetic landscape, or are incomprehensible amid the general uproar of language. This leaves the poet in an awkward position, in which

Caught (in mind)
beside the water he looks down, listens!
But discovers, still, no syllable in the confused
uproar: missing the sense (though he tries)
untaught but listening, shakes with the intensity
of his listening .

(P, 81)

The solution Williams finds to his search for a dipolar language is inherent in Whitehead's analysis. First of all, Whitehead divides importance into two aspects: one is based on "the unity of the Universe"

and is our ordinary use of the word importance; the other is a function of "the individuality of the details" and might better be called interest. The poet has a license, we might note, to take an interest in his world; and herein are Williams' descriptions justified. As Williams notes in one of his essays, "Writing, like everything else, is much a question of refreshed interest" (SE, 118). Yet, if the poet is to aspire to any degree of greatness, or to escape the limitations of what Whitehead calls "mere description," he must devise some means of designating importance, however subtle the technique.

In his early works, Williams yields to the temptation to say, "These things / astonish me beyond words" (CEP, 124), or, a little more subtly, "No one / will believe this / of vast import to the nation" (CEP, 121). Rod Townley notes that the poet's intrusion in "The Right of Way" (CEP, 258) is less offensive because it serves as a structural pivot. The poet begins with a string of observations:

In passing with my mind
on nothing in the world

but the right of way
I enjoy on the road by

virtue of the law--
I saw

an elderly man who
smiled and looked away

to the north past a house--
a woman in blue

who was laughing and
leaning forward to look up

into the man's half
averted face

and a boy of eight who was
looking at the middle of

the man's belly
at a watchchain--

The poet then includes his own observation of importance,
which works because it is objectified as a comment about
the speaker and because the poem returns to a final
observation:

The supreme importance
of this nameless spectacle

sped me by them
without a word--

Why bother where I went?
for I went spinning on the

four wheels of my car
along the wet road until

I saw a girl with one leg
over the rail of a balcony

Townley claims:

In many of the earlier poems, the importance of an
image is asserted primarily to justify having used
the image; the assertion has no structural function
in itself. But in the poem "The Right of Way," the
justifying phrase serves as a pivot on which to
swing the attention from the static, twelve-line
"photograph" (lines seven through eighteen) forward
to the resumed action ("sped me by them").²

Other Williams poems suggest meanings in subtle ways free from strident claims but indicative of value. For instance, "The Red Wheelbarrow" begins with the hint that "so much depends / upon" this object, and "Composition" suggests that the red paper box in some way corresponds to "eternity." More subtly, the "green" of the bottle "Between Walls" is somehow a substitute for the grass which cannot grow in cinders.³

The other technical extreme is to assume that importance is entirely self-evident. The trouble with this position is the relativity of importance among various people. As Townley sees it, "The problem is that one man's insignificance may be another's portent."⁴ Or, as Williams fears, "The insignificant 'image' may be 'evoked' never so ably and still mean nothing" (I, 101).

There must, then, be subtle ways to indicate importance which will function structurally and not offend aesthetically. In Paterson, the rhetorical passages are made to work by assigning them to a network of voices. These function as changes in tempo and as textures of multiple perspectives. For instance, in "The Delineament of the Giant," "--Say it, no ideas but in things--" (P, 6), speeds the pace with its dashes and direct address and also transfers us from the mythic dimensions of Paterson as giant to the concrete particulars of the houses and trees. The second intrusion is enclosed in

parentheses and foreshadows a theme to come. Similarly, the prose sections blend into this pattern, supplying new voices who are sometimes explicit in their statements and sometimes more concrete than the poetic sections in their irreducibility. Other voices are rescued by their echo effect, which converts them from comment to verbal entities. Examples include, "Divorce is / the sign of knowledge in our time, / divorce! divorce!" (P, 18), and "Stale as a whale's breath: Breath! / Breath" (P, 20). Single words or images continue to dislodge themselves and to echo throughout the epic, providing a continuing commentary: Divorce! The sea! Beautiful thing! It stinks! Credit! Other voices are assigned to the minister Hans, the Park, or the poet's divided self. Thus, the poet himself is saved the embarrassment of continual appraisal while a commentary is yet provided.

The most subtle means of indicating importance in Paterson is the poetic design which organizes the landscape into a concrete proof of the following assumption, which Whitehead states, but Williams demonstrates:

It follows that in every consideration of a single fact there is the suppressed presupposition of the environmental coordination requisite for its existence. This environment, thus coordinated, is the whole universe in its perspective to the fact.

(MT, 9)

Whitehead goes on to claim the necessity of feeling as

. . . the agent which reduces the universe to its perspective for fact. Apart from gradations of feeling, the infinitude of detail produces an infinitude of effect in the constitution of each fact. And that is all that is to be said, when we omit feeling. But we feel differently about these effects and thus reduce them to a perspective. "To be negligible" means "to be negligible for some outcome of feeling"; and feeling is graded by the sense of interest as to the variety of its differentiations.

(MT, 10)

Organization thus serves as the chief indicator of importance, and organization is provided primarily through the poet's response to the world in which he is involved. For Whitehead, feeling is not limited to the poet, but is an aspect of every occasion. Thus, in the emergence (concrecence) of each event, a subjective aim (feeling, or the mental pole) controls the dynamics and thereby indicates value.

ii

How, then, are language and events persuaded into being? For Williams, the birth of a poetic language is first of all the result of a sexual encounter between poet and world. In the opening of "Sunday in the Park," the poet envisions Paterson as mumbling,

Outside

outside myself

there is a world,

he rumbled, subject to my incursions

--a world

(to me) at rest,

which I approach

concretely--

The poet then comments,

The scene's the Park
upon the rock,
female to the city
--upon whose body Paterson instructs his thoughts
(concretely)

(P, 43)

With masculine authority, Paterson climbs the hill "and starts, possessive, through the trees" (P, 44). His actions concurrently pace off the landscape into a poem-- "(counting: / the proof)." Superficially, he supplies the energy for this creative event.

Upon closer observation, the action is really more complex. For one thing, the poet is only one among many--people and dogs--who walk the same path. The diction of the passage suggests an order of importance for these: poet as center, equally aggressive dogs, and then others of unsure step. Yet, all tread the same stones and thus supply perspective and measure to the event. Furthermore, the ground itself, though dry, exerts a type of persuasion--"passive-possessive." In a passage which seems to begin with the regulation of an Eliotic selfless love but which nonetheless ends in a modifier which may reflect on both ground and poet, Williams explores the complexity of love:

--that love,
 that is not, is not in those terms
 to which I'm still the positive
 in spite of all;
 the ground dry, -- passive-possessive

(P, 44)

There is thus a complex of forces involving poet, ground and others.

Williams differs from Whitehead in that Williams allows for a violence in love. The dynamics of the short story "The Use of Force" work out one of Williams' stronger statements concerning what he treats as a normal reaction between a doctor and his exasperating young patient. The rape of Beautiful Thing in "The Library" section provides a degree of judgment against such violence, and yet Paterson feels equally violent passions toward the Beautiful Thing. It seems as though violent desire is qualified only by the admonition that the virtuous woman is she who gives herself "forthwith" (P, 229), and that both male and female should loose their love to flow.

Williams also differs from Whitehead until the completion of Paterson in that he describes the attainment of the beatific vision as a process not unlike that of the scientific concept of entropy. Early critics interpreted Book Three of Paterson primarily as Williams' criticism against academia. We must remember, however, that Paterson is a poem about writing. As literature,

books are valuable in their ability to release a moment previously created. As materials for further composition, however, they are useless: one cannot build on the echoing of a life, or the ghost of a wind (P, 119). Rather, "The province of the poem is the world" (P, 122). As Charles Doyle notes, "these lines allow the same degree of reality to poem and world":⁵ both are a created order.

The positive value of the books resides in their power to activate the poet until he is ready to create his own poem out of the materials of his personal experience. Although the roar of books transmits no substance in itself, it provides the context within which the poet can identify his fear of the real world and finally confront the "beautiful thing," even within this room with its "library stench." Thus, as Joel Conarroe discovers in his study, the library jolts the poet into a positive experience through which the poet becomes better prepared to re-enter his world.⁶

The meaning of the poem can be unraveled into various thematic threads. Most obviously, the poem traces Paterson's attempt to escape from the world of reality. Leaving the locust tree that costs so much behind, Faitoute seeks relief from the heat in a "cool of books" which offer "to lead the mind away" (P, 95). The attempt is useless, however, for he carries with

him the awareness of the reality he has just left; and his premonitions of the "beautiful thing" blossom forth like the locust:⁷

and there grows in the mind
a scent, it may be, of locust blossoms

(P, 96)

When he tries to read, he finds the attempt destructive in two ways. First, he finds himself lost in the generalized stream of ideas which the sea represents:

And as his mind fades, joining the others, he
seeks to bring it back--but it
eludes him, flutters again and flies off and
again away .

O Thalassa, Thalassa!
the lash and hiss of water

The sea!
How near it was to them!

Soon!

Too soon .

(P, 101)

This sea, which represents death and the loss of particular values within a fluid universal, threatens to claim him along with all other deceased authors. So captured, he faces the second danger--that of being imprisoned as they are within the stale air of the library:

--and still he brings it back, battering
with the rest against the vents and high windows

(P, 101)

The place sweats of staleness and of rot
 a back-house stench . a
 library stench

(P, 103)

Thus, his attempt to escape through books is defeated in that the beauty of the real world continues to tempt him even as the library threatens to destroy his creative life and individuality.

Another thread of meaning demonstrates the fact that in failing to cope adequately with the potential beauty he cannot ignore, the poet is frustrated both emotionally and linguistically. Having been lost in a chaos of details, Faitoute returns to the turmoil of his own mind,

in which a falls unseen
 tumbles and rights itself
 and refalls--and does not cease, falling
 and refalling with a roar, a reverberation
 not of the falls but of its rumor

unabated

(P, 96)

He reads about the major catastrophes of his city (cyclone, fire and flood) and about industrial problems, murders and superstitions. Soon he is overcome by "a roar of books" until "his mind begins to drift" (P, 100) and he begins to glimpse the "beautiful thing" in a variety of forms. However, he is frustrated by her evasions and by his own fears both of beauty and of defeat. As he sees the "beautiful thing" entwined with

the destructive fire, "An identity / surmounting the world, its core," he shrinks along with the others, "squirting little hoses of / objection . . . squirting / at the fire" (P, 120). The image which follows of the boy "who drove a bull-dozer through / the barrage at Iwo Jima" emphasizes not only the risks involved in tangling with the beautiful thing but also the pathos of having the experience of beauty without a language to express it:

Voiceless, he
 action gracing a flame
 --but lost, lost
 because there is no way to link
 the syllables anew to imprison him

No twist of the flame
in his own image : he goes nameless
until a Nike shall live in his honor--

And for that, invention is lacking,
the words are lacking:

(P, 120)

The letter from DJB which follows intensifies this pathos by illustrating the inadequacy of a contemporary speech which is neither accurate, coherent or expressive of fulfilling experiences. However, even this letter holds potential for the beatific experience if a language could only be found.

There is a dual loss in this section, for not only is the beatific experience beyond language, but beauty itself is insubstantial and difficult to isolate.

In the encounter with beauty, "The person [is] submerged / in wonder, the fire become the person" (P, 122). Similarly, the beautiful thing is "the flame's lover" (P, 123), and the union between her and the poet is accomplished only through the sexual flame. Thus, the poet cannot separate the beautiful thing from his experience with her or one's attempt to explain her:

Let them explain you and you will be
the heart of the explanation. Nameless,
you will appear
Beautiful Thing
the flame's lover--
(P, 123)

It is in this context that we must read the inverted bell section. In the heat of their own experiences, authors recorded their impressions of beauty. To the poet, however, these experiences are no longer alive--they no longer burn. Thus,

We read: not the flames
but the ruin left
by the conflagration

Not the enormous burning
but the dead (the books
remaining). Let us read .

and digest: the surface
glistens, only the surface.
Dig in--and you have

a nothing, surrounded by
a surface, an inverted
bell resounding, a

white-hot man become
 a book, the emptiness of
 a cavern resounding

(P, 123)

Although the poet was first aware of his own risk of being destroyed in an encounter with the beautiful thing, he now becomes conscious of the fact that he must be an agent of violence to her if he is to experience beauty. Visiting her now embodied as a negro maid in the basement by the laundry tubs, he struggles to admit the violence and destruction that are a necessary part of claiming beauty. He finds her "lethargic, waiting upon me, waiting for / the fire" (P, 125) and he realizes that "The page also is / the same beauty : a dry beauty of the page-- / beaten by whips" (P, 126). He rapidly reviews images of the tapestry hound drawing blood from the throat of the unicorn, of yelping site hounds, and of the rape of beautiful thing. Unless she be violated, he discovers, she remains passive. But the poet is reluctant to possess her: "I can't be half gentle enough," he confesses, "toward you, toward you, / inarticulate, not half loving enough" (P, 128). Thus, the section ends with an admonition to action if he is to experience the flame--

BRIGHTen the cor
 ner
 where you are!
 --a flame.
 black plush, a dark flame.
 (P, 128)

while the next section describes the mud and flood which exist when the flame does not burn or supply substantial forms.

There is, however, a level on which the poet succeeds in Book Three. Accepting "the cost of dreams" and the challenge to "translate, quickly / step by step or be destroyed--(p, 101), the poet embraces the foulness of his materials (P, 103). He takes the risk of exposing himself to the public, criticizing those who fear the destruction involved in the sexual nature of the beatific experience and who thus

. . . marry only to destroy, in private, in
 their privacy only to destroy, to hide
 (in marriage)
 that they may destroy and not be perceived
 in it--the destroying

(P, 106)

Unlike these timid ones, his is a public marriage of two representative women--the backwoods savage and the other "from an old culture" (P, 110). A parody of this situation (involving Paterson, Phyllis and Corydon) takes place in Book Four to illustrate the difficulties

involved in attempting this union, but here the poet initiates his relationship in the prophetic atmosphere of a Pentecostal wind. The coming of the fire is a fulfillment of Pentecost. Williams' Spirit is not called down through the smokey ceremony of senseless sacrifice nor in the visitations of a magical cat. Instead, the Spirit is passed on in the mysterious fertility rites of the Africans.

The incident of the mauled bottle explores the nature of the poetic act. As Seamon reminds us, although Williams' images "culminate in a metaphor for the product, the bottle in the fire," "it is necessary to trace the processes which contribute to its creation."⁸ That process involves the unforming and reshaping of a found object into an art object through the heat of the same flames which symbolically burn the library. These defiant flames master those basic objects of reality "out of which [the] poem must be constructed, but whose very nature is to resist being made into poetry, to resist being shaped by convention, ideas, and art."⁹ The significance of the mauled bottle is the fact that the flame becomes a permanent part of this re-formed object. As it cools, the glass becomes

 splotted with concentric rainbows
of cold fire that the fire has bequeathed
there as it cools, its flame
defied--the flame that wrapped the glass

deflowered, reflowered there by
 the flame: a second flame, surpassing
 heat

(P, 118)

With this image the poet offers some hope of capturing the proof of flame in the texture of the object. The rainbows of fire also assume that the one who views this new texture will participate in the essence of the original flame. Thus, beauty is the joint product of the poet's imagination, the stubborn reality of the object, and the reader's participation in this act. The incident of the bottle reveals

. . . how Williams goes about this task of letting the world have its say in the poem. He is sustained in this effort by his faith that the design left on the bottle (the method and pattern of the poem) are in immediate contact with the word. There is no simple relationship between the two, but the "splotches" and "concentric rainbows" may reveal and preserve the designs of experience, and thereby give "powerful additions to our lives."¹⁰

The forging flame of the imagination is not a permanent condition for the poet, however. The only way he can produce the glaze on the bottle is to cool it. The imagery of the verse foreshadows the flood waters to come:

. . . A hot stone, reached
 by the tide, crackled over by fine
 lines, the glaze unspoiled
 Annihilation ameliorated: Hottest
 lips lifted till no shape but a vast
 molt of the news flows. Drink

of the news, fluid to the breath.
 Shouts its laughter, crying out--by
 an investment of grace in the sand
 --or stone: oasis water. . . .

(P, 118)

Hence, following the flame of inspiration comes a cooling-off period during which time the poet must descend "from certainty to the unascertained"--into new details for new poems. This descent is a painful experience, but even worse is the chaos of disorientation which follows. Sister Bernetta claims that "Fire and flood, though horrors, were beautiful, but not the receding of the waters, redolent with death. Having lost their form, shrubs and rushes and flowers droop, covered with mud; the banks are not solid."¹¹ Thus, as the flame is spent and the flood extinguishes it totally, the poet is faced with the task of beginning again.

However negative it may appear, the flood defines a normal process wherein the poet must constantly seek new materials. The waters destroy the poet's psychic condition and his perception of a formed world; they prepare him to resume work on a new project and prevent him from lingering in the false glory of prior accomplishments. Realistically, the flood illustrated the fact that it is humanly impossible to maintain the heat of imagination indefinitely. In scientific terms, the imagination ignites the materials of the ground into a

creative energy which like a flame exhausts its materials and extinguishes itself as a result of entropy. In terms of poetic theory, Williams admits

Writing . . . is directed, not idly, but as most often happens (though not necessarily so) towards that point not to be determined where movement is blocked (by the end of logic perhaps).

(SE, 118)

Breslin holds that all of Williams' "life and art were a series of new beginnings--a process of constant renewal."¹² Of Book Three he says,

Language begins anew at the point where speech falls to an inarticulate "uh"; art begins again at the point where art ends. With the "FULL STOP" Paterson is left in a kind of graveyard--thus the allusion to Gray's "Elegy"--but left, alone and free, in the creative darkness.

So, at the bottommost point of despair, lines suddenly tighten, wood abruptly turns up. This is exactly the kind of reversal we have seen happening again and again in the poem; it cannot be explained rationally, it results from no act of conscious will on the part of Paterson, but simply from the natural life of feelings, a process in which moods build, disintegrate, generate their opposites.¹³

In the process of generation, the poem passes through a stage of intense creative energy which Eli Siegel praises. In seeking a distinction between Eliot and Williams, Siegel poses the criterion that "The important matter is, whether the lines arose from a state simultaneously of lucidity and excitement--from an intense state, so intense that verbal architecture supervened." What he finds is that

. . . in the deepest sense, there is more art in the Williams work. This is so, because, while in "Pru-frock" the arrangement does not arise from heat or from glow, in "Young Sycamore" there is a cunning artistry of itself arising from a glowing, stirred state of mind . . . the thing seen and the music work at once. And there is a true complexity in the thing seen: what's seen changes to touch. The whole poem is really about the logic of a tree--about the accuracy of sincere energy. The poem is about simplicity altering into opulence.¹⁴

However in Williams' poetic career, until the completion of Paterson, Book Three, there is a tragic quality to this process of intensity followed by entrophy. Concentrating on rebirth, the poet yet must anticipate the exhaustion of his creativity from time to time. As Williams says in an early essay on Shakespeare, "the artist keeps alive by losing his life . . . by making 'plays,' objects, realities which he has to abandon to make another--perfectly blank to him as soon as they are completed" (SE, 56). With the publication of Book Five there is a new tone in which hope extends beyond renewal into the feeling of positive satisfaction in a created event's completion. The positive tone of Williams' last poems corresponds with Whitehead's concept of the concrescence of an event until it reaches satisfaction (completion).

Louis Martz agrees that Book Three represents a moment of achievement. Noting the ways in which Paterson deviates from Williams' original plan of 1943, he observes that Williams "seems to have moved his climax from Book

Four to Book Three, which we remember, is to represent the 'achieving' in a man's life. In many ways Book Three represents this sense of full achievement."¹⁵ Martz's analysis of Williams' changing plan is especially useful:

"Say it, no ideas but in things" . . ., sometimes taken as the essence of Williams' poetic, is only the beginning of the poetic of Paterson, which is a poem not simply of beginning, but of "beginning, seeking, achieving . . ." Book One begins with the facts, the things. In Book Two Williams seeks to catch "the movement of one voice among the rest" . . . And in Book Three we have the achievement of a poetic voice that holds the roar of all contemporary consciousness within the mind.¹⁶

Thus, through the process of Book Three, Williams begins to shift the emotional tone of his creation from the despair of exhaustion to the triumph of achievement. In contrast to the close of Book Four, where the despair continues to exist--

This is the blast
the eternal close
the spiral
the final summersault
the end

(P, 204)

Book Five concludes in "the analogy of the dance, that ordered energy which posits without insisting":¹⁷

Yo ho! ta ho!

We know nothing and can know nothing
but
the dance, to dance to a measure
contrapuntally,
Satyrically, the tragic foot.
(P, 239)

The evolution of an event which Whitehead describes provides a model for Williams' aesthetic. According to Whitehead, three factors participate in the creation (concrescence) of an event. In his system, each event is a co-creation of efficient causation (the past), self-causation, and final causation (God, the principle of concretion) (PR, 134). The initial stage he terms the conformal, or physical stage. "In this phase there is the mere reception of the actual world as a multiplicity of private centres of feeling, implicated in a nexus of mutual presuppositions" (PR, 323). These are the completed "givens" of the world, or the efficient causes--the past. By claiming that these private centres "are felt as belonging to the external centres, and are not absorbed into the private immediacy" (PR, 323), Whitehead is consistent with Williams' position as Paterson begins his Sunday walk through the park: there is an outside world to approach.

Whitehead's second stage of creation (or becoming)
"is governed by the private ideal, gradually shaped in
the process itself; whereby the many feelings,

derivatively felt as alien, are transformed into a unity of aesthetic appreciation immediately felt as private" (PR, 323). Note Whitehead's apprehension of this process as an aesthetic event--as nature's original work of art. He goes on to name this phase the incoming of appetition, "which in its higher exemplification we term 'vision'" (PR, 323).

In this second stage, we also become aware of two kinds of structure. "In the language of physical science, the 'scaler' form overwhelms the original 'vector' form: the origins become subordinate to the individual experience. The vector form is not lost, but is submerged as the foundation of the scaler super-structure" (PR, 323). Once again, the structure of Paterson seems to parallel Whitehead's process. In the first two books, the doctor-poet pursues a path through the park in order to explore his world, and the poetic consciousness behind the poem posits a journey from Paterson down the Passaic and finally into the ocean. These are vectors in the early stages of consciousness. We are aware of a definite flow of time and of a linear journey. There is also a search for influences--a statement of the theme of divorce, and a diligent search for a language. These themes assume casual relationships wherein past events have effected present conditions. Increasingly, however, the poem moves to a scaler

structure, interweaving motifs and integrating the landscape. Thus, what has appeared to the critics as a weakness could indeed be understood as a natural phase in the creative development of consciousness. In this phase of self-determination, purpose and creative synthesis, the vectoral plan of the opening statements begins to fade and the scalar, prehensive action takes over. Things begin to organize themselves into related clusters rather than into linear elaborations of the original themes. What has been noted as the symphonic structure of Paterson may also be viewed as the organic development of events.

In Whitehead's final phase of concrescence, the event organizes and synthesizes itself around transcendent aims or ends. These "pure potentials" or "forms of definiteness" which help to direct and structure the process of becoming Whitehead calls eternal objects. They are roughly equivalent to Plato's forms, but they differ in that they cannot exist apart from the immediate world of actuality. In their diversity, all eternal objects exist within some actual entity or occasion somewhere in the universe. Thus, although no temporal entity contains all eternal objects, all eternal objects must be present in some actual entity. In their unity, the one actual entity which contains all eternal objects is God. God alone among entities is timeless, because

he never obtains satisfaction. Each new entity contributes to his existence, which continues to enlarge. Thus, his primordial nature is the determinate of all potentiality and also the result of all actuality. The primordial nature of God is seen as a "lure," guiding the final phase of concrescence (PR, 281). Initially, all eternal objects are potential to the occasion. Yet, the "relevance of an eternal object in its role of lure is a fact inherent in the data . . . the admission into, or rejection from, reality . . . is the originative decision of the actual occasion" (PR, 131).

God as Whitehead perceives him is a combination of a type of pantheism and a form of transcendence. In Whitehead's language, he is dipolar. His physical pole (consequent nature) is constituted by physical prehensions of all other actual entities in the world (PR, 134). As such, he is "the fluent world become 'everlasting' by its objective immortality in God" (PR, 527). Yet, his mental pole (primordial nature) transcends the limits of the physical world and comprises "the general potentiality of the universe," since the ontological principle demands that "Everything must be somewhere" (PR, 73). Thus, God's primordial nature is "the concrescence of . . . all eternal objects" (PR, 134). As final cause, God thus plays a very specific role in the becoming of actual occasions. God provides

each concrescence its ideal aim around which its creative synthesis of data is ordered (PR, 374). He makes each concrescence possible and supplies each actual entity and the world as a whole with order, structure, and novelty. But what is unique with Whitehead's God is the manner in which the world in turn influences God. As each actual occasion exercises the freedom of its own subjective aim, it completes its private, subjective form until it reaches satisfaction (PR, 39). Upon reaching satisfaction, it contributes to the emerging content of God as an actual entity, thereby helping to determine him. Whitehead's God is not changeless although he is eternal. Rather, he is in a dynamic relationship with the rest of actuality. He lures actual entities and occasions with his eternal objects. He then inherits the actual nature the occasions assume as they are cocreated by God, their own aims, and the efficient causation of past occasions.

In the one major passage in which Williams is thought to address God,¹⁸ the nature of Williams' God resembles that of Whitehead's. The one addressed is the eternal bride and father (P, 75). As bride, the deity is pantheistic in nature and exists as the female park and the extensions of her landscape. When the poet appraises her features, he responds with both terror and delight. His amazement is akin to the

respect typically awarded to a god. He is also aware of the vastness and omnipresence of the nature-bride. In a subtle inversion, introduced as "a simple miracle," the deity is recognized as knowing "the branching sea, to which the oak / is coral, the coral oak" (P, 75). Thus, whereas the poet is safe in his local and can drown in the universal sea, the deity knows the sea and views the roots and branches of the tree as though they were coral. The following passage expresses the poet's faith that the local tree or feature is therefore as divine as its distant counterpart. "Why should I move from this place / where I was born?" he asks, "knowing / how futile would be the search / for you in the multiplicity / of your debacle." He goes on to observe, "The world spreads / for me like a flower opening . . . " (P, 75).

The image of father is not so developed as that of bride, but the themes are those of authority and procreation, with allusions to the giant Paterson and Frazer's dying god. As the poet begins his prayer, he remembers his former attitude toward praying and his fears when, as a child, he stopped the practice. He shook with fear "until sleep--your sleep calmed me--" (P, 74). Here we have a fear of authority, alleviated through the identification of the "you" with the sleeping giant Paterson, who dwells not in the skies but within

the landscape. The allusion to Frazer's Golden Bough recognizes the importance of a god and identifies infertility with a god's impotence. The implied solution is for the lover to overcome his terror of the bride and to participate in procreation. Such is the poet's need. But, unlike Eliot's wasteland, Williams' world fulfills procreation and is not atrophied after death: rebirth continues to occur. Thus, the world is a model for the poet--a hope whose message is reassuring in its entirety but overwhelming in its immediate reality. The cycle of composition and decomposition is a despair one must endure because of the hope of the total cycle. This is the ironic despair of acceptance which Williams claims occurred to him personally when he was about twenty. It was "a sudden recognition to existence," he wrote Marianne Moore, "a despair--if you wish to call it that, but a despair which made everything a unit and at the same time a part of myself." He goes on to suggest, "I suppose it might be called a sort of nameless religious experience. I resigned, I gave up" (SL, 147).

The way in which the deity of Paterson differs from the despair of composition and decomposition is in his transcendence of the individual phases through the integrity of the whole event. "But you," the poet claims, "never wither--but blossom / all about me" (P, 75). This ultimate you can be seen as the combination

of father and bride, as the marriage of the giant Pater-son with the female aspects of his world. The deity is therefore both immanent and transcendent; he shares the particularity of the landscape and yet escapes the despair of the sequence of the moment. Like Whitehead's God, he does not exist outside of the world (as traditionally) and yet he exists in the timelessness that transcends an individual entity's process of becoming. According to Whitehead, he is the lure to creativity because "he is the unlimited conceptual realization of the absolute wealth of potentiality" (PR, 521). He is also the design of the actual, because he includes all events as they reach satisfaction. Thus, this present but impersonal god suggests the ultimate fusion of energy and event--of motive and design. Furthermore, Whitehead's concept of God suggests a parallel role for the poet as he participates in his own emerging world of poetry. "The sheer force of things," Whitehead claims, "lies in the intermediate physical process: this is the energy of physical production." In this process of becoming,

God's role is not the combat of productive force with productive force, of destructive force with destructive force; it lies in the patient operation of the overpowering rationality of his conceptual harmonization. He does not create the world, he saves it: or, more accurately, he is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness.

(PR, 525-26)

There is, then, a clear ethic of persuasion within Whitehead's world whereby God lures rather than forces his world, while various elements of actuality influence rather than determine each other. As a philosopher, Whitehead describes an ultimate system which, although compatible with the details of matter-of-fact, is yet untroubled by the despairs of commonplace living. He admits evil as the condition "when things are at cross purposes" (RM, 97), but he sees God as luring the world into order.

As a poet committed to all he sees, Williams must acknowledge many cross-purposes of a concrete world. He still experiences some despair in the cycle of death and rebirth. He even advises against the search for "the N of all / equations" or "for that nul // that's past all / seeing" (P, 77). Yet, behind his poetry there is always the support of that circle which precludes death and destruction as final end. The principle of creativity continues to lure Williams' world into birth, and he achieves increased satisfaction in the subsequent acts of completion.

Thus, to recognize energy as the essence of matter and persuasion as the essence of creation is to discover a reason to write poems for a man such as Williams. Science and philosophy explain this process significantly, but the ultimate appeal is to a poet's

extraordinary resources of understanding through which he achieves the final synthesis. In writing to Sister Bernetta Quinn in 1951 about Paterson, Williams protested that

. . . one fault in modern composition . . . is that the irrational has no place. Yet in life (you show it by your tolerance of things which you feel no loss at not understanding) there is much that men exclude because they do not understand. The truly great heart includes what it does not at once grasp, much as the great artist includes things which go beyond him.

(SL, 309)

Earlier, in 1947, he informed Kenneth Burke that he was trying in Paterson to work out a new prosody "by writing poetry rather than 'logic' which might castrate me, since I have no ability in that medium (of logic)" (SL, 258). Each of these statements assigns the imagination the task of finding nonrational connections. I suspect that Williams' techniques are related to that of the Zen koan, a question or problem which has no intellectual solution. For example, one might be asked, "When all things are reduced to one, to what is the one to be reduced?" Defying logic, the question throws the student back on himself and his awareness of life. Zen especially seeks to give one an immediate awareness of things and not mere understanding of ideas about things. Thus, the sense of riddle is one of the driving forces of a Williams' poem; in fact, in Paterson he approximates the Zen koan I

described by attempting to follow a method which will allow "by multiplication a reduction to one" (P, 2). As Kenneth Rexroth reminds us, the final meaning of Williams' poetry "is that the transcendent and the immanent are not somewhere else. They are the thing itself. . . . It was not until the great popularity of Zen Buddhism that Williams' 'message' would become generally comprehensible."¹⁹

Anthony Libby recognizes that the concept of the epiphany is also useful in the discussion of Williams because the "epiphany suggests a mysticism of this world, without recourse to any sort of transcendentalism; this is the heart of Williams' poetry."²⁰ According to Libby, the epiphany involves

. . . a rather unusual and generally logical approach to revelation, an anti-transcendental mysticism of particular place, a vision of the spirituality of individual things which can unite subject and object without necessarily implying any escape from ordinary reality. At its simplest the epiphany is a perception of the ultimate significance of ordinary things, a sense of heightened reality. . . . ²¹

Only after an analysis which discovers integrity and symmetry does the mind attempt to synthesize the situation into a moment of radiance and claritas. Thus, the object or experience achieves its epiphany "not in mystic unity but in separation . . . and as a result not of meditation but analysis."²² Libby stresses the importance of

logical analysis in order to identify the process whereby Williams discovers the essence of a thing in his objectivist poems. "Williams seeks a reality of essences, not surfaces," he claims, "and he creates it through analysis and deliberate artificiality."²³ The point is, therefore, that Williams gains access to an object's essence by breaking apart its surface. Libby is right in recognizing the importance in the initial analysis, but the moment of synthesis involves an intuitive act of mind. Up to a point, science, philosophy and logic explain the process of a poem; but the final synthesis which eludes definition distinguishes a poem from a proposition or theory.

iii

Charles Olson found his clue for his 1950 essay on "Projective Verse" from Williams' practice. Noting the energy of Williams' lines, Olson formulated his own theory that a "poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it . . . , by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader."²⁴ Olson goes on to propose two halves to the poetic process. "Let me put it baldly," he says:

the HEAD, by way of the EAR, to the SYLLABLE
the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE²⁵

Interestingly enough, the first half of his proposition is supposedly the energetic flow, while the second half (the heart) is the locus of attention and control where the shaping takes place.

Energy, then, according to Olson, results from "the union of the mind and the ear."²⁶ "Can't you tell a brain when you see what it does, just there?" he asks; for since "all the thots of men are capable of can be entered on the back of a postage stamp," therefore, "is it not the PLAY of a mind we are after, is not that that shows whether a mind is there at all?"²⁷ The intellect for Olson is thus a lively activity which cannot operate outside of the information supplied by the ear. Personality itself results only as a man forms himself from the phenomena of his field. The openness of this field and its free exchange of forces is treated in an essay called "Human Universe." In a passage which smacks of Whitehead, Olson claims:

For this metaphor of the senses--of the literal speed of light by which a man absorbs, instant on instant, all that phenomenon presents to him--is a fair image as well, my experience tells me, of the way of his inner energy, of the ways of those other things which are usually, for some reason, separated from the external pick-ups--his dreams, for example, his thoughts (to speak as the predecessors spoke), his desires, sins, hopes, fears, faiths, loves. I am not able to satisfy myself that these so-called inner things are so separable from the objects, persons, events which are the content of them and by which man represents or reenacts them despite the suck of symbol which has increased and increased since the great Greeks first

promoted the idea of a transcendent world of forms. What I do see is that each man does make his own special selection from the phenomenal field, and it is thus that we begin to speak of personality, however I remain unaware that this particular act of individuals is peculiar to man, observable as it is in individuals of other species of nature's making (it behooves man now not to separate himself too jauntily from any of nature's creatures).²⁸

The mind is thus a clearing house of external and internal forces, and inner feelings are fused with their external objects. In brief "man and external reality are so involved with one another that, for man's purposes, they had better be taken as one."²⁹ It is perhaps unconventional for Olson to identify the heart as the agent of control. Yet, Olson is very close to Whitehead, who defines feeling as the subjective aim of the individual and as the limiting agent of its subject form. Olson is more daring in selecting breath as the unit of measure, and in treating language primarily as speech. He returns us to the birth of poetry as oral communication; but since the poem is stored now in printed type rather than in memory, no longer do we need the memory aids of set cadences and rhymes. Rather, the poem can rely upon visual spacing to record the timing of its composition.

The return to speech suggests that Olson is encouraging the nuances of extemporaneous expression. Historically, we have distinguished writing from speech in terms of its logical care. Speech tends to follow the organization of the mind thinking and allows for

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abrupt changes, asides, and even revisions and adjustments as thought progresses. One assumes that expository writing has been revised until the process of clarification is eliminated and the most logical and precise expression has been recorded. The more formal the essay, the less it may betray the experience of its composition. By identifying poetry with speech, Olson does not advocate careless composition, but he does encourage the use of a language which arises from experience rather than from formal demands. In Shakespeare, he sees a change in language quality between 1600 and 1608 whereby "logicality persists in the syntax and image but the thinking and weighing in of the quantity stop twist and intensify the speech, thus increasing the instancy."³⁰ Thus, Olson's appeal to the heart allows for a control which is powerful rather than staid.

In his introduction to Olson's Selected Writings, Robert Creeley points out Olson's distinction between Williams and Pound. Pound, Olson claims,

. . . solves problems by his ego: his single emotion breaks all down to his equals or inferiors. . . . Which assumption, that there are intelligent men whom he can outtalk, is beautiful because it destroys historical time, and thus creates the methodology of the Cantos, viz, a space-field where, by inversion, though the material is all time material, he has driven through it so sharply by the beak of his ego, that he has turned time into what we must now have, space & its live air.
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By contrast, "Bill HAS an emotional system which is capable of extensions & comprehensions the ego-system . . . is not."³² Thus, as Creeley says, this emotional system

. . . does not limit the context of writing to an assumption of understanding--or, better, it attains a way of writing that feels as it goes as well as sees. This allows the experience of writing to be more sensitive than the ego alone can admit.

According to this evaluation, Williams, like Olson, exposes himself more fully to outside forces than does Pound.

Olson thus articulates many principles which Williams intuitively struggled to achieve in his practice. The fact that Williams quoted a substantial section of Olson's "Projective Verse" in his Autobiography testifies to Williams' agreement with Olson's ideas. More directly, he wrote to Robert Creeley,

I share your excitement, it is as if the whole area lifted. It's the sort of thing we are after and must have. . . . Everything in it leans on action, on the verb: one thing leads to another which is thereby activated. . . .³³

His response suggests that he approves especially of the emphasis upon energy and motion. Williams himself might be speaking when Olson says, in an article titled "Equal, That Is, To The Real Itself":

. . . energy and motion became as important a structure of things as that they are plural, and, by matter, mass. It was even shown that in the infinitely small the older concepts of space ceased to be valid at all. . . . Nothing was now inert fact, all things were there for feeling, to promote it, and be felt; and man . . . was suddenly possessed or repossessed of a character of being, a thing among things, which I shall call his physicality. It made a reentry of or to the universe. Reality was without interruption, and we are still in the business of finding out how all action, and thought, have to be refounded. . . . What is measure when the universe flips and no part is discrete from another part except by the flow of creation itself. . . . Rhythm, suddenly, which had been so long the captive of meter, no matter how good . . . was a pumping of the real so constant art had to invent measure anew.³⁴

The distinction between Olson and Williams is primarily one of quantity in the crucial areas of energy and space. Williams agrees that "ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION," but one could not really say that in his practice he always follows the emphatic restatement that "in any given poem always, always one perception must must must MOVE, INSTANTER, ON ANOTHER!"³⁵ Olson's definition of field composition requires the poet to be open to the forces of his world. Yet, he is not as open to them as is Williams, who can allow a seven-page letter from Cress to decelerate Book Two of Paterson and cancel almost entirely the poet's breath and line. For Williams hears more than does Olson, and he is capable of a longer silence before he negotiates with the intrusion and brings it into the control of his own feelings. This

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lower value on selectivity corresponds to his commitment to the elements of his local. Thus, his second distinction from Olson is that of a smaller space. On this point, Olson is more like Pound, seeking underlying civilizations and carefully choosing particulars of value. In a dance, "Apollonius of Tyana," he causes Tanya (place) to praise the remarkable nature of Apollonius, "who moved most gradually from this center out as far as a man then could go . . . so far as space goes, as you too have the opportunity to move"; and Tanya admonishes that to discover that space, "one must MOVE."³⁶

The dance is perceived as a dance of the world, which moves across history as well as space.³⁷ Because of its cosmopolitan nature, the descent which Apollonius also undergoes, remaining silent for five years, resembles a journey into Jung's collective unconsciousness more than it parallels a Williams' descent into more personal matters. Thus, in comparison with Olson, Williams processes more varied energies and occupies a more limited space. Primarily, he finds his immediate surroundings to be so persuasive as to demand his total attention.

CONCLUSION

According to Whitehead, "the science of physics conceives of a natural occasion as a locus of energy" (MT, 237-38).

Whatever else that occasion may be, it is an individual fact harboring that energy. The words electron, proton, photon, wave-motion, velocity, hard and soft radiation, chemical elements, matter, empty space, temperature, degradation of energy, all point to the fact that physical science recognizes qualitative differences between occasions in respect to the way in which each occasion entertains its energy.

(MT, 238).

Charles Olson responds to this age of energy with the conclusion that "There is only one thing you can do about kinetic, reenact it. Which is why the man said, he who possesses rhythm possesses the universe. And why art is the only twin life has--its only metaphysic" (SW, 61). He goes on to claim that "if man is once more to possess intent in his life . . . he has to comprehend his own process as intact, from outside, by way of his skin, in, and by his own powers of conversion, out again" (SW, 61). Furthermore, he goes so far to suggest that perhaps "that the ultimate reason why man departs from nature and thus

departs from his own chance is that he is part of a herd which wants to do the very thing which nature disallows--that energy can be lost" (SW, 63).

With these statements as background, we can recognize the importance of energy in Williams' work. Williams is intuitively sensitive to the forces in his world with which he seems to negotiate and then to transmit with no loss of energy through the machinery of a poem. He maintains a high value for motion, even seeing death ultimately as a failure of the imagination to keep forces flowing. His technical skills progress from charged images in a loose form, to surface statements about mind and structure, to a unity primarily on the structural level, to a final maturity in which structural forces convey intense images of contemplative value.

The structure upon which Williams depends, especially in his epic, is one of relationships evident only if viewed as interacting forces. This model is best understood in Whitehead's terms.

Whitehead refuses to view his world as a series of dualities: mind and matter, subject and object, nature and God. Neither will he allow either member of dual factors to enclose the other. Instead, he posits a polar system in which various forces and entities interact. He intuits a type of world community in which both animate and inanimate objects have life to the extent that they entertain novelty.

Whitehead sees actuality as a creative event--as a process of becoming. His is not an accidental world which can be merely described. Yet, it lacks the determinism of immanence or of transcendence, of innate or of imposed laws. The freedom of the world results from the co-creativeness of its triune causation: the efficient causation of the past, self-causation, and the final causation of God. The past and God have a persuasive effect upon the subjective aim of an emerging event, but ultimately the event is responsible for its own subjective form.

Each event has both an autonomous value and a social existence. The independent event reaches the closure of satisfaction, but it also penetrates as one efficient cause into a larger pattern of becoming. Thus, each event has importance not only in terms of its peculiar interest, but also as a result of its relation to other events. Furthermore, it contains eternal objects and thus participates in the realm of universal value.

Williams' also is a world of becoming. As the form rises from the ground, it reaches satisfaction, so that new forms must constantly emerge. Or, as the drop of water falls to the ground, it must travel to the sea and then return inland as mist. The present builds upon the past, and yet it demands its own novel character.

Individual objects are of interest and importance to Williams and thus attract his closest scrutiny. Yet, they also fit into a wider background, which is changed by their presence. Furthermore, they influence the poet and his work in their private growth, interacting with his subjective aim and persuading him in various ways. Thus, his order is that of an interlocking system in a poetic community.

Williams is also influenced by eternal values, which penetrate his work at times as an ethic of human ideals, other times as the aesthetic order of shapes, color and number. Thus, he participates in the eternal realm as well as in the transient matter of fact.

Whitehead perceives a world informed by creativity and based on an aesthetic order. Williams seeks to design a poetic universe which springs from the creative impulse of the total world and which participates in its actual order. Starting from the multiplicity of facts which he assembles, Whitehead seeks to enlarge his terms to the universal truths of a cosmology. Intuiting a general sense of importance in the objects of his world, Williams betrays an interest in specific forms and seeks to express ideas only through things.

Poet and philosopher--each man displays his dedication to a world where much is possible and everything is valuable. Each also is aware of a basic energy which

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is the life of an actual or a poetic occasion. It is this energy which creates the event, which is the design of an actual or of a poetic world. To be in touch with such an energy is thus to understand the design of the poem, or to participate in the emerging design of a world. Whitehead explains a world in which an individual can locate his energies in the design of the actual. Williams creates a poetic world which is the embodiment of this knowledge.

In various ages, leaders have felt the need to emphasize one half of a double truth to remedy a current imbalance of emphasis. In Christianity, St. Paul emphasized faith, whereas James defended works. In a Victorian age, Matthew Arnold and Walter Pater both stressed the sweetness and light of Hellenism to counterbalance the strength of Hebraism. So it would seem that Williams stressed the need for a poetic structure consistent with scientific and philosophic advances, protesting the tired forms and content of his contemporaries. As he became comfortable with his own contributions to the modern measure, he appears to have relaxed enough to deal more openly with perennial themes in the subject matter of his final works. Although he continued to stress the need for structure until the end of his life, his own craft demonstrated a synthesis of structure and theme whereby the reality of the structure conveys the reader

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to a solution of such perennial concerns as suffering, death and love. Thematically as well as structurally, poetry emerged as the moral force Williams sought throughout his life.

A dominant theme in these poems is an awareness of pain. Because pain exists, the poet commissions his imagination with the task of experiencing, for "he who has no power of the imagination cannot even know the full of his injury" (SE, 15). Yet, he also acknowledges his own power to come to terms with this reality through the reconciling form of the dance, which unites many broken things, "giving them thus a full being" (SE, 14).

The poem "To a Dog Injured in the Street" illustrates the function of poetry for Williams in this late period. Pain is accepted and represented realistically, and yet the harmony of the poem transcends existential discomfort. The opening lines place the poet immediately in control:

It is myself,
 not the poor beast lying there
 yelping with pain
 that brings me to myself with a start--
 as at the explosion
 of a bomb, a bomb that has laid
 all the world waste.

The adverbial clause modifying start offers two interpretations. As an objective correlative, it indicates the emotional impact of the experience. Yet, since the

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persona claims to arouse himself with a start equal to that explosion, he assumes a power consonant with the power of destruction: he is equal to the task.

The task of the poet is to assuage his pain through song. The lines from Keats provide a literary objective correlative to that relief:

A drowsy numbness drowns my sense
 as if of hemlock
 I had drunk . . .

Yet, paradoxically, it is not the escape of romantic imagery but rather a catalogue of painful events which releases this poet from pain. To blot out the cries of the dying dog, he issues his own cries of remembered pains. It is interesting that Williams quotes only pleasant nature images from his acclaimed tutor, René Char, since for Williams himself, beauty is found in the structured control of pain itself and perhaps in the katharsis of expression. Within the measured rhythm of the triadic line, the poet combines the elements of a faithful mimesis with those of harmony. Thus, the poem transcends trouble through the very act of concentrating upon suffering.

"To a Dog Injured in the Street" achieves beauty through the devious route of participation in the difficulties of life. A more ideal beauty is suggested in the "Song" which compares beauty to a shell from the sea.

Lines three and four combine the theme of the importance of the isolated object--"where she rules triumphant"--with the theme of love, as represented by the approaching waves which submerge the shell. Stanza two is a masterpiece of the marriage of image and metrics, form and content:

scallops and
 lion's paws
 sculptured to the
 tune of retreating waves

This marriage is made explicit in the final stanza and represents the accomplishment of the poem:

undying accents
 repeated till
 the ear and the eye lie
 down together in the same bed.

(PB, 15)

It is, then, in his final period that Williams validates his interest in line and measure. With his discovery of the triadic line he found a form which facilitated a forward motion which was yet contained in smaller units or beats. Moving beyond that discovery into further use of the image of the dance, he found his own still point of the turning world. Always evident is the poet's involvement with his environment. Yet, it is the motion of the line itself rather than the logic of the rhetoric which contributes to the poem's balance. Hence, linguistics continues to outweigh semantics, and metrics to

overbalance imagery, in Williams' process of imitation. However, in these later poems, the fusion of content and form is most satisfactory. In this fusion, the metrics of poetry serve the function of the orchestra, to

. . . organize those sounds
 and hold them
 to an assembled order
 in spite of the
 "wrong note" . . .
 (PB, 80)

It is significant that Williams finally equates the imagination with love, for both forces have a similar function. Like love, the imagination accepts the world as it is and yet also engages itself with that world in order to produce a meaningful pattern. Because the poet is a part of nature, he does not have the function of manipulating something separate from himself, but rather he is a function of the environmental process. Thus, his mind and the environment are participants in a transaction which brings about a new organic whole. As in love, the imaginative mind cares for minute objects, attempts to detect beauty in the midst of suffering and ugliness, and is dedicated to its craft. It treats the poem as though it were a human body, for Williams felt that writing was as serious a task as learning to care for a patient. As he says, "It is a gradual conviction that writing, and especially verse, has parts precisely as the human body has also of which it is made up and

if a man is to know it, it behooves him to become familiar with those parts (SE, xiii). In a chapter in which he deals specifically with himself as doctor-poet, he claims,

The poem springs from the half-spoken words of such patients as the physician sees from day to day. He observes it in the peculiar, actual conformations in which its life is hid. Humbly he presents himself before it and by long practice he strives as best he can to interpret the manner of its speech. In that the secret lies. This in the end, comes perhaps to be the occupation of the physician after a lifetime of careful listening.

(A, 362)

Examining each patient, Williams diagnosed his malady and sought to renew the person's body. Listening to the expressions of human minds, he sought to organize and record experience in the body of a poem and thus to renew the mind in imitation of nature's own creative process. For,

The mind is the cause of our distresses
 but of it we can build anew.
 Oh something more than
 it flies off to . . .
 A new world
 is only a new mind.
 And the mind and the poem
 are all apiece.

(PB, 75-76)

NOTES

The following symbols are used throughout for primary works:

Williams, William Carlos.

- A The Autobiography. New York: Random House, 1951.
- CEP The Collected Earlier Poems. New Directions, 1951.
- CLP The Collected Later Poems of William Carlos Williams.
 rev. ed. New Directions, 1963.
- EK The Embodiment of Knowledge. Ed. Ron Loewinsohn.
 New Directions, 1974.
- IWWP I Wanted to Write A Poem. Reported and edited by
 Edith Heal. Boston: Beacon Press, 1958.
- I Imaginations. Ed. Webster Schott. New Directions,
 1970.
- P Paterson. New Directions, 1963.
- PB Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems. New
 Directions, 1949.
- SE Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams. New
 York: Random House, 1954.
- SL Selected Letters. Ed. John Thirlwall. New York:
 MacDowell Obolensky, 1957.

Whitehead, Alfred North.

- AI Adventures of Ideas. New York: The Macmillan
 Company, 1961.
- MT Modes of Thought. New York: The Free Press, 1938.

- PR Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1929.
- RM Religion in the Making. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930.
- SMW Science and the Modern World. New York: The Free Press, 1953.
- S Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927.

INTRODUCTION

¹See Hugh Kenner, A Homemade World: The American Modernist Writers (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975).

²Robert Langbaum, The Poetry of Experience (New York: Random House, 1957), p. 20.

³Walt Whitman, Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. James E. Miller (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), p. 500.

⁴Quoted by Rod Townley, The Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 117.

⁵See Linda Wagner, The Poems of William Carlos Williams (Middleton, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1963).

⁶See James Guimond, The Art of William Carlos Williams (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968).

⁷Roy Harvey Pearce, The Continuity of American Poetry (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 348.

⁸Ibid.

⁹J. Hillis Miller, Poets of Reality (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1966), p. 292.

¹⁰Alan Ostrom, The Poetic World of William Carlos Williams (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1966), p. 19.

¹¹Ibid., p. 16

¹²See Mike Weaver, William Carlos Williams: The American Background (Cambridge: University Press, 1971).

¹³See Jerome Mazzaro, William Carlos Williams: The Later Poems (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973).

¹⁴See John Stanley Scott, "Aspects of the Problems of Structure in Modern American Poetry and Philosophy," Diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 1972.

¹⁵See Joseph Riddel, The Inverted Bell (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974).

¹⁶Charles Altieri, "Objective Image and Act of Mind in Modern Poetry," PMLA, 16, No. 1 (January 1976), 101.

¹⁷Maurice Beebe, "What Modernism Was," Journal of Modern Literature, 3, No. 5 (July 1974), 1072.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 1073.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., p. 1078.

²¹Ibid., p. 1077.

²²Riddel, p. 13.

²³Ibid., p. 257.

²⁴Elizabeth A. Meese, review of Mazzaro's William Carlos Williams: The Later Poems, Boundary 2, 3, No. 3 (Spring 1975), 835.

CHAPTER I

¹Vivian Koch, William Carlos Williams (New York: New Directions, 1950), p. 104.

²M. L. Rosenthal, ed., The William Carlos Williams Reader (New York: New Directions, 1962), p. 372.

³Walter Jackson Bate, ed., Criticism: The Major Texts (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1952), p. 21.

⁴Samuel Coleridge also distinguishes between a copy and an imitation. See Biographia Literaria, Vol. II, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 29, 56, 255. However, Coleridge's imitation stresses the act of unification, "the interfusion of the SAME throughout the radically DIFFERENT, or the different throughout a base radically the same" (p. 56).

⁵Townley, p. 91.

⁶In A Bibliography of William Carlos Williams (Wesleyan University Press, 1968, p. xix), Emily Wallace notes that in 1944 Williams considered collecting his works under the title of "The Complete Collected Exercises Toward a Possible Poem." Thus, Williams qualified his success in terms of craft rather than metaphysics.

⁷A. Kingsley Weatherhead, The Edge of the Image (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), p. 106.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹³Nancy Willard, Testimony of the Invisible Man (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1970), p. 2.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁵See my Chapter IV for further discussion on this topic.

CHAPTER II

¹"How can we accept Einstein's theory of relativity, affecting our very conception of the heavens about us of which poets write so much," he asks, "without incorporating its essential fact--the relativity of measurements--into our own category of activity: the poem" (SE, 283).

²Robert Creeley, ed., Selected Writings of Charles Olson (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1966), p. 20.

³Williams betrays his continuing interest in this image, written first in "The Wanderer," by repeating it in Paterson. However, the changes in punctuation and spacing show his increased interest in structure.

⁴Townley, p. 154.

⁵Joel Conarroe, William Carlos Williams' Paterson: Language and Landscape (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), p. 63.

⁶Benjamin Sankey, A Companion to William Carlos Williams' Paterson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 12.

⁷Cary Nelson, "Spatial Form in Williams," Journal of Modern Literature, 1, No. 4 (May 1979), 558.

⁸Sankey, p. 194.

⁹Conarroe, p. 30.

¹⁰Pearson, p. 348.

¹¹Nelson, p. 559.

¹²Ostrom, p. 105.

¹³Coleridge identifies the origin of metre as "an interpenetration of passion and of will, of spontaneous impulse and of voluntary purpose." See Biographia Literaria, Vol. II, p. 49.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 130.

¹⁵Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1966), p. 7.

¹⁶T. S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1952), p. 21.

¹⁷Bernard Duffey, "The Experimental Lyric in Modern Poetry: Eliot, Pound, Williams," Journal of Modern Literature, 3, No. 5 (July 1974), 1101.

¹⁸Wagner, p. 51.

CHAPTER III

¹Scott, p. 7.

²John Butt, ed., The Poems of Alexander Pope (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 514.

³Kenneth Allott, ed., Matthew Arnold's Poems (New York: Dutton, 1965), p. 446.

⁴Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams (New York: The Modern Library, 1918), p. 472.

⁵Miller, p. 4.

⁶Joseph M. Bernstein, ed., Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine: Selected Verse and Prose Poems (New York: The Citadel Press, 1965), p. 12.

⁷Frank Kermode, ed., Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 48.

⁸Sartre, Psychology of the Imagination, p. 8.

⁹Sartre, Imagination (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1962), p. 146.

¹⁰Sartre, Psychology of the Imagination, p. 7.

¹¹Adams, p. 431.

¹²Ibid., p. 434.

¹³Victor Lowe, Understanding Whitehead (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), pp. 242-43.

¹⁴Scott, p. 11.

¹⁵Craig R. Eisendrath, The Unifying Moment: The Psychological Philosophy of William James and Alfred North Whitehead (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. xi.

¹⁶Eisendrath, p. x.

¹⁷Quoted in Lowe, p. 242.

¹⁸Weaver, pp. 45-46.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 47.

²⁰Ibid., p. 48.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., p. 51.

²³Ostrom, p. 69.

²⁴Weaver, pp. 82-83.

²⁵Dewey quotes exclusively from Adventures of Ideas.

²⁶John Dewey, "The Philosophy of Whitehead," in The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, ed. Paul Schilpp (Northwestern University, 1941), p. 644.

²⁷Ibid., p. 647.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 647-48.

³⁰Ibid., p. 648.

³¹Ibid., p. 657.

³²Ibid., p. 658.

³³Ibid., p. 660.

CHAPTER IV

¹William Carlos Williams, "Seventy Years Deep," Holiday, 16 (November 1954), 55.

²Townley, p. 149.

³When Babette Deutsch interpreted the green as truth contrasting with the "lie" of cinders, Williams admitted the aptness of this interpretation, which "tho not specifically intended," yet "fits perfectly and is quite 'true.'" See SL, pp. 264-65.

⁴Townley, p. 149.

⁵Charles Doyle, "A Reading of 'Paterson III,'" Modern Poetry Studies, 1, No. 3 (1970), 142.

⁶Conarro, p. 71.

⁷Charles Doyle identifies the locust blossom with the "beautiful thing" in Doyle, p. 141.

⁸Roger Seamon, "The Bottle in the Fire: Resistance as Creation in William Carlos Williams' Paterson," Twentieth Century Literature, 11 (1965), 16.

⁹Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 24.

¹¹Sister Bernetta Quinn, "Landscape and Dream in Paterson," Journal of Modern Literature, 1, No. 4 (May 1971), 545.

¹²James E. Breslin, William Carlos Williams, An American Artist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 24.

¹³Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁴Eli Siegel, "T. S. Eliot and William Carlos Williams: A Distinction," University of Kansas City Review, 22 (1955), 41.

¹⁵Louis Martz, "Paterson: A Plan For Action," Journal of Modern Literature, 1, No. 4 (May 1971), 515.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 517.

¹⁷Hugh Kenner, "To Measure Is All We Know," Poetry, 94 (May 1959), 127-32.

¹⁸See Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry (New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1966), p. 109.

¹⁹Kenneth Rexroth, American Poetry in the Twentieth Century (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), p. 78.

²⁰Anthony Libby, "'Claritas': William Carlos Williams' Epiphanies," Criticism, 14 (1972), 25.

²¹Ibid., p. 24.

²²Ibid., p. 25.

²³Ibid., p. 23.

²⁴Creeley, ed., p. 16.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 18.

²⁷Ibid., p. 19.

²⁸Ibid., p. 61.

²⁹Ibid., p. 60.

³⁰Ibid., p. 34.

³¹Ibid., pp. 81-82.

³²Ibid., p. 82.

³³Ibid., p. 6.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 47-48.

³⁵Ibid., p. 17.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 136, 137.

³⁷Ibid., p. 144.

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