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On the Path to Paterson: Prose and the Search for the American Language

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ON THE PATH TO PATERNON:
Prose and the Search for the American Language

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Mary Carolyn Click

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Approval Sheet

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

M. Carolyn Click
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Approved, May 1996

Christopher MacGowan

J.H. Willis Jr.

Thomas Heacox
To my husband, Henry Taylor III
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ABSTRACT

William Carlos Williams argued that a poet was truest to his craft and to himself when his work reflected the age into which he was born. As a poet and physician of the American 20th century, he embarked on a search for a language that would dramatize the distinctive mix of chaos and loveliness that was everyday life in his New Jersey environs. His experimentation with new poetic forms, specifically his work with prose/poetry, was part of his insistence that every age must build on the past but claim the world on its own terms. Out of that philosophy was born his long poem Paterson, where the prose of newspaper accounts, history and correspondence intersect with traditional poetry. In this essay, I will analyze the progression of Williams' prose form, from his early experimentation in Kora in Hell: Improvisations to the prose/poetry sequences of Spring and All and Descent of Winter, and finally to Paterson. To tell the story of Paterson, that is to craft a modern pastoral that rings with a "true" language, Williams must possess the land and, in turn, be possessed. That required a poetics grounded in the history of America, with all its contradictions. "Americans have never recognized themselves. How can they? It is impossible until someone invent the ORIGINAL terms," Williams wrote in In The American Grain. His use of prose is part of that search for the "original terms," crucial to his finding a "true" language particular to his times. His belief in the eternally changing language cleared the way for a new generation of poets to embark upon their own experiments with new poetic forms.
ON THE PATH TO PATERNON:
Prose and the Search for the American Language
INTRODUCTION

From 1914 onward, William Carlos Williams argued for a poetics that reflects contemporary time and place and emphasizes the local. In his long poem *Paterson*, Williams attempts to forge a modern American language to argue his theme of a man who is like a many-dimensioned city and to explain and redeem an America soured and scarred by industrialization. He was driven, he said, by a fierce desire to discover America and its true language. He explained that compulsion in a July 22, 1939, letter to Horace Gregory, written while Williams was working on the organization of Book I of *Paterson*. The letter, which elaborates his motivations for writing his 1925 history *In the American Grain*, also provides insight into his thinking about *Paterson*:

Of mixed ancestry, I felt from earliest childhood that America was the only home I could ever possibly call my own. I felt that it was expressly founded for me, personally, and that it must be my first business in life to possess it; that only by making it my own from the beginning to my own day, in detail, should I ever have a basis for knowing where I stood. (SL 185)
That "possessing" of America was a crucial goal for Williams, driving him to develop a language and poetics that, for him, would define his age. In a statement about *Paterson*, dated May 31, 1951, and accompanying the publication of Book IV, Williams wrote that a poem must "speak for us in a language we can understand," and also that the "language must be recognizable" (xiii). These concepts are also central to his thinking about the shape of modern poetic forms: the concepts of "understandable" and "recognizable," although complementary, are separate and distinct. What Williams seeks for himself is a language grounded in an understanding of the past but reflective of the present. What he seeks for the reader, his audience, is the shock of recognition. His end result is a modern mock-pastoral, a discordant twist on the traditional rural poem that reveals the New World transformed and disfigured by 20th-century industrialization. To write this modern poem, which is so crucial to his ongoing search for the recognizable language, he uses prose to help invent a new shape for the line.
To Williams, the poetry of a civilization without a discernible, living culture was a poetry of empty, false phrases. "The / language stutters," Williams writes in Book I of *Paterson* (21). Williams argued that he and his contemporaries could smooth the impediment only by finding new rhythmic forms compatible to the age. Early in his writing career, he showed his serious intention for new poetic invention with the publication of *Kora in Hell: Improvisations* (1920), prose sequences that he recognized "could not by any stretch of the imagination be called verse" (K 29) but yet contained virtue in that they represented "an opening of the doors" (K 28). *Spring and All* (1923) and *The Descent of Winter* (1928), sequences of alternating prose and poetry, followed.

In a 1932 letter to Kay Boyle, Williams wrote of his experimentation with prose as a form of poetry. "Prose can be a laboratory for metrics. It is lower in the literary scale. But it throws up jewels which may be cleaned and grouped" (SL 130). His desire, he wrote to Boyle, was to exact an honest measure of the language, which he explained further, meant "to be
alert to facts, to the music of events, of words, of
the speech of people about me” (SL 131). Implicit in
that search, he told Boyle, was an effort to adopt new
forms and avoid the nostalgia that comes from looking
backward:

When I say backward I by no means intend to
signify that we should not look back at past
mastery. Look and be sure what you’re looking
for and at. But by backward I mean don’t try
to make the mistakes that can be made by lack
of intelligence and information as to what
has been going on. Personally, I’d like to
start by saying, don’t write sonnets. The
line is dead, unsuited to the language.
Everything that can ever be said from now
until doomsday in the sonnet form has been
better said in twelfth-century Italian. (SL
134)

Prose is a tool for his poetic invention, part of
that “creation of new form” (SL 134) he insisted to
Boyle was so important:

A minimum of present new knowledge seems to
be this: there can no longer be serious work
in poetry written in ‘poetic’ diction. It is
a contortion of speech to conform to a
rigidity of line. It is in the newness of a
live speech that the new line exists
undiscovered. To go back is to deny the first
opportunity for invention which exists.
Speech is the fountain of the line into which
the pollutions of a poetic manner and
inverted phrasing should never again be
permitted to drain. (SL 134)
His intention was to express an unsentimental America, a task that demanded a more potent, forceful language than the poets of the previous American century employed. Williams built on the traditions of the past, including the work of Walt Whitman and the Transcendentalists, but he refused to accept "anything that had no counterpart in myself by which to recognize it" (SE 177). Williams recognized in prose an element for expressing the American language of the 20th century. And while he began his experimentation with prose as separate from poetry, by the time he gets to Paterson he is comfortable with the notion that prose is part of his new poetic form.

In a talk delivered at the University of Washington in 1948, entitled "The Poem as a Field of Action," Williams said: "It is there, in the mouths of the living, that the language is changing and giving new means for expanded possibilities in literary expression and, I add, basic structure - the most important of all" (SE 291). For Williams, prose represented an expanded possibility of literary expression and altered structure, although he was often
unclear as to what he meant when he spoke of "a revolution in the conception of the poetic foot" (SE 281). Through that expansion, Williams brought about a new concept of the American poem.

Williams’ experiments with prose/poetry forms are a means of articulating his search for a genuine modern American poetic language. "How shall I be a mirror to this modernity?" the poet asks in his 1917 poem, "The Wanderer" (CP I 108) as he rides the ferry from New Jersey to New York. His first step is to establish a geographical stance, to make a deliberate decision to limit his field of vision initially to the local. Williams stressed that no poet could define all of America, so his drive to define the promise and failings of his country required him to turn his attention to one locale. Often in his poetry from 1914 onward he describes the people and the events in his own home of Rutherford, N.J. But in his statement about Paterson, he notes that "my own suburb was not distinguished or varied enough for my purpose" (xiii). He needed a larger city, but one close to home. And to fulfill that mission of possessing America, that city
had to have a “definite history associated with the beginnings of the United States” (xiii). Paterson, N.J., fit into his general theme of the “resemblance between the mind of modern man and a city” (xii) because the city had an industrial history that tracked the country’s, there was a strong immigrant population, suggestive of the demographics at work in other parts of the United States, and the landscape had been altered because of industrialization. For Williams, Paterson, with its puzzling contradictions and inevitable riddles, represented a mirror of America.

In “The Wanderer” he is driven by the old muse figure onto the “deserted streets of Paterson” to find those who make a "short bread-line" (CP I 111) of humanity. The people of Paterson, on strike and hungry, are the ones who will help him find a path to the necessary American language. The details are concrete and powerful:

The women's wrists, the men's arms red
Used to heat and cold, to toss quartered beeves
And barrels, and milk-cans and crates of fruit!

Faces all knotted up like burls on oaks,
Grasping, fox-snouted, thick-lipped,
Sagging breasts and protruding stomachs,
Rasping voices, filthy habits with the hands. (CP I 112)

At the end of the poem, Williams bathes in the dirty Passaic River, symbolic of his immersion in the life of Paterson and its people.

To search for the "true" language of Paterson, to tell the story accurately, Williams must be married to the place and landscape. Benjamin Sankey underscores the importance of the marriage motif as it applies to Williams' ideal of those who would embrace the American wilderness:

> Marriage is the condition of the primal landscape, and it is still the mythic norm. But in fact our own time is characterized by 'divorce,' as we wait for the poet who can bring things together ('marry' them) by means of language. (13)

Williams argues that the people's lack of knowledge and understanding of the past, as well as their alienation from the natural environment, leads to a "divorce" from the "true" language, the language defined by Williams as appropriate and relative to the present world. This true language is paralleled by the "timeless," classical language of the Passaic Falls, which is so central to the landscape of Paterson. The falls
“expresses the demand of the place to be made articulate” and also reveals the “persistent course of life” (Sankey 112). The roar made by the falls is representative of the cacophony of inarticulate speech that Williams must interpret as poet. To facilitate understanding and revelation, to, in effect, wed the people to their landscape and language, Williams draws on prose sources for *Paterson*, including historical abstracts, books, letters and newspaper accounts. It is through those diverse accounts that he shows the myriad connections of people to the place. The prose selections thus serve a multi-dimensional function as both a record of an historical event and as a means of finding the true language. Williams explained this concept in the letter to Boyle:

> The form of poetry is that of language. It is related to all art first, then to certain essential characteristics of language, to words then and finally to everything among all the categories of knowledge among which the social attributes of a time occur. (SL 131)

Williams uses his knowledge of the “social attributes of a time,” that is, his observations and
understanding of the local, to find a language that can
speak for the living culture. Sankey notes:

In a sense, the entire poem concerns what
Williams announced as the subject of Book
Three: the search for a language by means of
which to make vocal the elemental features of
the place and the modern ‘replicas.’ This
language must be one appropriate to American
people living now, here, in this place: a
language distinct from that brought over by
settlers from England, but also ‘rising
above’ the stunted language actually used by
the people who live here. (Sankey 3)

Through his prose experiments, Williams finds a
new measure to express that appropriate, true language
of Paterson, and by extension, 20th-century America.
Williams’ theory of history, laid out particularly in his *In The American Grain*, helps explain the use of historical prose in *Paterson*. The book is polemical, clearly a vehicle for Williams to interpret history to suit his own literary devices. He ignores heroes of conventional histories, preferring instead to profile, in some cases, anti-heroes such as Aaron Burr. But as part of a 1920s revisionist history movement, *In the American Grain* establishes Williams’ notion that Americans must understand themselves as Americans and not simply as transplanted European settlers. Otherwise, he believed those embarked upon creating a true American language were doomed to failure. In one of the most significant passages of *In the American Grain*, Williams writes of this need to confront one’s true origin:

> It is an extraordinary phenomenon that Americans have lost the sense, being made up as we are, that what we are has its origin in what the nation in the past has been; that there is a source in America for everything we think or do; that morals affect the food and food the bone, and that, in fine, we have no conception at all of what is meant by
moral, since we recognize no ground our own - and that this rudeness rests all upon the unstudied character of our beginnings; and that if we will not pay heed to our own affairs, we are nothing but an unconscious porkyard and oilhole for those, more able, who will fasten themselves upon us. (109)

Williams’ analyses in *In the American Grain* are part of the prose foundation that he lays for *Paterson* (Martz 134). In his 1925 history, Williams was compelled by the search for an origin and source for the American character to document history and language through original texts, including the *Magnalia Christi Americana* of Cotton Mather, the letters of Sam Houston and the diaries of George Washington. These primary prose texts are critical sources for Williams as he seeks to reinvigorate history and language in his own, sometimes contrarian, way (Conrad 156). He argues that the academic approach to the study of history - history as a relic, set in time - enslaved rather than liberated the reader and the writer. Thus, to him, America was more than an empty slate upon which the European settlers wrote well-known stories, such as the founding of Jamestown, the landing at Plymouth Rock, the Boston Tea Party, and the writing of the
Declaration of Independence. Williams saw the founding and settling of the nation and continent as far more complex than such conventional historical markers would have us believe. *In the American Grain* addresses some of what Williams considered omissions in traditional histories, including questions about the settlers' impact on indigenous tribes and natural resources, and the changing mindset of the settlers as they conquered what appeared to be a land of limitless resources and opportunity. Williams was criticized by reviewers for engaging in subjective history (Conrad 1-3), but he uses the power of creative prose to reinvent history and help distinguish what he saw as false language from true.

Williams makes clear that language, specifically the language carried "in their ears" (SE 290), is inevitably linked to history. He believed this so firmly that several figures, including Cotton Mather, Benjamin Franklin and John Paul Jones, take on the "I" of the narrator. To Horace Gregory, who wrote the preface to the 1939 edition of *In the American Grain*, Williams explained: "I did this with malice
aforethought to prove the truth of the book, since the
originals fitted into it without effort on my part,
perfectly, leaving not a seam” (SL 187). Conrad notes
that Williams’ study of history includes a history of
writing, “a study of the ways in which language has
been used to shape our sense of the place and its
possibilities” (Conrad 17).

In his chapter on Pere Samuel Rasles, Williams
interjects himself into the book and debates the
Frenchman Valéry Larbaud on the merits of the Puritans’
contribution to America. Larbaud argues that the
Puritans, through their sheer tenacity in conquering
the raw elements and honoring a strict religion,
brought a vigor and beauty to the land. But Williams
sees this, not as freshness, but as a closed, fearful
society cut off from the land and its native people.

Having in themselves nothing of curiosity, no wonder, for the New World - that is
nothing official - they knew only to keep their eyes blinded, their tongues in orderly
manner between their teeth, their ears stopped by the monotony of their hymns and
their flesh covered in straight habits. (IAG 112)
Williams argued that the Puritans could not possess the land, and effectively rejected it, because they were imbued in Old World culture and values (Conrad 30). “There was no ground to build on, with a ground all blossoming about them - under their noses. Their thesis is a possession of the incomplete - like senseless winds or waves or the fire itself” (IAG 114). Williams carries this concept of incomplete possession of the land into Paterson where the Sunday crowd in the Park is “amnesic” (60) because its members do not understand their history. If biography is history, as Williams believed, then the hero of Paterson must take on the Puritans, the academics, and Williams’ poet contemporaries who fail to understand that they cannot search for the true American language in Europe. Michael Bernstein rightly describes these as Williams’ "triple-headed antagonist":

The Puritans, the academics, and the expatriates: Three figures embodying the rejection of America, united in Williams' imagination as a single, triple-headed antagonist, to be met by the 'trinitarian' local hero, Paterson - eponymous giant (Myth), New Jersey city (History) and struggling poet-doctor (Autobiography), in a combat for the still speechless conscience of the land. (Bernstein 198)
Williams expands his theory of possession of the land to show the consequences of failing to understand and embrace a shared history. In *Paterson*, he writes on two levels, showing how historical figures changed the physical landscape and, by doing so, altered the people’s connections to their natural environment. Thus, Alexander Hamilton's vision of a great industrial center on the Passaic has its consequences - the "oozy fields / abandoned to grey beds of dead grass" (P 7) and the "-girls from / families that have decayed and / taken to the hills" (P 12). In Williams' mind, Hamilton's federalist ideas, including the conception of the Federal Reserve System and the Society for Useful Manufactures (P 73), led to corruption and greed and, ultimately, to the failure of American promise and language:

The language, the language
fails them
They do not know the words
or have not
the courage to use them . (P 11)

The children born of these disintegrating families then:

may look at the torrent in
A connection to the land is imperative to discovery of a true language, William asserts. And thus, the Sunday crowd in the park of Paterson Book II, the masses that Hamilton disdainfully dismisses as a "great beast" (P 67), have never discovered the common thread that binds them; that is, a common language in which to interpret the promise of the New World. The families disintegrate because they are "divorced" from the land and the language:

Minds beaten thin
by waste--among
the working classes SOME sort
of breakdown
has occurred.(P 51)

Again, Williams argues that the connection was compromised by the Puritans, whose unwillingness to embrace the New World imposed a rigidity that continued on into the 20th century. Williams maintains that the destruction of that world, through exploitation of land and people, cut off the avenue to the shared language.

The idea of the natural American world tainted by the conquering human hand is carried from In the
American Grain into Paterson through the historical prose passage in Paterson on the inhabitants of the Ramapos Mountains. The Jackson Whites include uprooted Indians from the Tuscarora tribe, Hessian deserters and escaped Negro slaves, examples of disparate groups that have no common ground, no common language. Williams argues that they are united only in that they are exploited by the ruling class, forerunner to the 19th and 20th century industrialists. The "bold association of wild and cultured life" (P 12) reflects the class warfare that exists in America, despite its founding as a land where "all men are created equal" (Dec. of Ind.). The class differences are clearly set out in the passage, justifying Williams’ claims of exploitation. The cabins of the lower class, including the ironworkers, charcoal burners and lime kiln workers, are "hidden from lovely Ringwood" (P 12) just as the lives of the modern day textile workers of Paterson are removed from those of the factory owners.

Throughout his writings, Williams is persuaded of the destructive nature of a ruling class. "History! History!... History begins for us with murder and
enslavement, not with discovery" (IAG 39). It is the same ironical lesson, albeit without the bloodshed, that he finds in Cortez's final destruction of the civilization at Tenochtitlan:

Cortez, dejected, seeing that it would be necessary to exterminate them before he could succeed in taking the city and dreading the horror of such a course, decided with reluctance, in order to impress them, to burn the noble edifices in the great square which had served Montezuma for aviaries. ... Later, the Conqueror tried to rebuild the city! (IAG 37-38)

An account of the conqueror attempting to rebuild what he has destroyed is refined in Paterson to incorporate the circumstances of the industrialized 20th century. The successors to Columbus and Cortez, industrial conquerors of the American landscape, have no more lands to discover or peoples to enslave. But Williams suggests that those embarked on industrial expansion and wealth are just as destructive as their explorer forebears. Williams argues that the disintegration of the working classes is a direct result of the uneven distribution of wealth. The prose passage describing the attack on the German Singing Societies of Paterson in Book II of Paterson
illustrates this theme: A disgruntled property owner, William Dalzell, fires at members of the societies whom he fears will trespass on his property (P 46). The “quiet group of singers” are transformed into an “infuriated mob” who burn Dalzell’s barn and attempt to take justice into their own hands. The mob is representative of the masses of humanity who are gathered, by necessity, at the intersection of the nation’s fledgling industrial centers. They are "Voices! . Indeterminate" (P 45) to be fed into the huge manufacturing machines during the week.

In the American Grain parallels the themes of exploitation of the land and people that Williams explores in prose and poetry passages of Paterson. In In the American Grain, Williams describes the New World before its discovery as a place "marked with its own dark life." Once Columbus landed "the western land could not guard its seclusion longer; a predestined and bitter fruit existing, perversely, before the white flower of its birth, was laid bare by the miraculous first voyage" (IAG 7).
Williams illustrates in *Paterson*, Book I (9) how discovery alters the surroundings through the 19th century prose account of the mussel beds. David Hower’s discovery in February 1857 of pearls inside the mussels leads to a bitter fruit: The economic exploitation of the landscape through overharvesting of the beds and destruction of the pearls (Sankey 36). Hower is the pivotal local figure, whose life is shaped by outside forces once he ceases relying on the natural world for sustenance. He is described as poor with a large family, a man who at first ignores the pearls and then later sells them for a small price. The entrance of Tiffany, the Hamiltonian middleman propelled by profits, spawns the transformation of the mussel from food to a commodity and leads to the harvesting of the bivalves for profit and not for food. Ultimately, a large pearl is destroyed, “which would have been the finest pearl of modern times” (P 9), when its shell is boiled open. The mussel beds, representative of the exploited and receding natural world, are desecrated by an industrial force too large to bring under control.
Williams selects historical prose passages that directly speak to an America that, as it becomes industrialized, finds its natural world receding. That environment recedes both in a physical sense and in a psychic sense. The chasing of the mink in Book II of Paterson is an important illustration of this uncomfortable tension. The police officer does not know what kind of creature he has come upon, only that it is a "strange black animal too small to be a cat and entirely too large for a rat." The frightened mink, representing wildness and nature, takes refuge under a steel grating. Two police officers armed with billy clubs try to catch him. A shot is fired but the explosion and noise allow the mink to escape down the street - the animal once again seeks asylum in a manmade structure, a basement grocery store under a saloon, but later apparently returns to the wild. There is no trace of it the following day: "The cellar was examined again in the morning, but nothing further could be discovered of the little critter that had caused so much fun" (P 49). There is no sense of the connection between man and beast here; instead, the
mink is seen as an adversary, albeit one that is unimportant and an object of fun.

The collision of European man with America's indigenous people, people Williams considers central to the life of the natural American world, occurs in another significant prose passage in *Paterson*, Book III, with the killing of the Indians by the Dutch soldiers. The Indians are unjustly accused of stealing. One tries to dance the Kinte Kaye, a religious death dance, but receives so many blows that he drops dead, unable to complete the religious act. The second is mutilated, prompting lamentations among the female Indian prisoners. The women wail that it is "civilized" men who exact the greatest cruelty and who are more savage than the savages they are trying to best:

There stood at the same time, 24 or 25 female savages, who had been taken prisoners, at the north-west corner of the fort: they held up their arms, and in their language exclaimed. "For shame! For shame! such unheard of cruelty was never known, or even thought of, among us. (P 103)

The tightrope walkers crossing the river in *Paterson*, Book III (103) suggest the same theme, although more pastoral, of attempted conquering of the
elements. The walk goes to the heart of the dilemma Williams faces: to know history is to take risks in understanding what it means. Sankey notes "For the poet to embrace the foulness of historical America, as he knows he must do in order to win his release from it, means taking a risk like that of a tightrope walker" (131-132). Like the protagonists of his In the American Grain, Williams, or Dr. P as he sometimes calls the protagonist in Paterson, must wrestle with the contradictions and limitations imposed upon him by the altered landscape.

Sankey argues that Williams’ desire for a new form to explain America is linked "to the poet’s struggle with himself to accept the present world" (2). But the struggle extends beyond mere acceptance of the world to the redemption of its inhabitants through the search for the true or appropriate language of the time. Williams looks to the primary prose texts in Paterson in much the same way he used such texts in In the American Grain, becoming an exegete of language as much as history. "Americans have never recognized
themselves," Williams writes in *In the American Grain*.

He continues:

> How can they? It is impossible until someone invent the ORIGINAL terms. As long as we are content to be called by somebody else's terms, we are incapable of being anything but our own dupes. (226)

Williams' use of prose is part of his determination to invent the original terms, that is to find an idiom that is genuinely American. He examines the historical documents that make up Paterson's history but he makes them "original" in the text by placing them in different contexts and reformulating crucial elements to explain his search for the American voice. Brian Bremen identifies four categories of those documents; ones that are quoted verbatim, ones Williams revised slightly, ones that he altered radically and ones that are fabrications (29). A dramatic example of Williams' manipulation of the text is the passage on the death of Mrs. Sarah Cumming, which Williams utilizes as an example of "false language." Williams alters the passage that he selects from Barber's *Historical Collections of New Jersey* to suggest that Mrs. Cumming is a repressed, silent figure who plunges
over the falls to rid herself of an equally silent and repressed pastor husband. But in Barber, there are additional passages that describe her as amiable and endearing, with a wide circle of friends. Her plunge over the falls is attributed, not to malcontent, but to the same symptoms that manifested themselves earlier that morning when she suffered a dizzy spell (412). Williams excises those elements of Mrs. Cumming’s personality from the newspaper account because those descriptions do not serve his purpose of contrasting a false language with the “true” language of the falls. Mrs. Cumming, divorced from the landscape and from the removed figure of the Rev. Cumming, is attracted to the roar of the falls, representing inarticulateness, just as Sam Patch is shortly thereafter (P 15-16).

Williams’ insistence upon looking inland toward America to answer the roar of the falls can be linked to his disdain for poets, such as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, who had abandoned America for Europe. He felt a particular kinship to Walt Whitman and that poet’s often frustrated effort to make his 19th century audience understand the unique American experience.
Sankey notes that "The example of Walt Whitman was never far out of Williams' mind as he was writing *Paterson*; he respected, and attempted to continue, Whitman's search for an American language" (3).

Williams, like Whitman, embraced America's contradictions as both a virgin land and a land that had been violated by its settlers. But for Williams, the struggle to accept and explain such contradictions was more complicated simply by virtue of his living in the 20th century.

Williams was convinced that his attempt to form "a new form of poetic composition, a form for the future" (IWWP 30) was compromised by Eliot, who was so successful with the publication of *The Waste Land*. In a 1957 interview, Williams recalled Eliot as being among the most learned of modern poets but one who was "looking backward," and taking contemporary poets with him. "I felt he had rejected America and I refused to be rejected and so my reaction was violent" (IWWP 30).

James Breslin suggests that the publication of *The Waste Land* cast Williams in a role "at once humble and messianic":

In Whitman he had a revolutionary predecessor whose acceptance of the New World Williams hoped to generate among his own contemporaries, while in Eliot he had a feudal contemporary who provided an exact focus for all of his poetic and social repudiations. (61)

While Whitman provided Williams a strong revolutionary impulse, it was Emerson who spurred Williams to explain the present through an understanding of the relationship between the self and the world (Rapp 51). Emerson believed that history is biography, that a philosophy of history must be grounded in self:

We are always coming up with the emphatic facts of history in our private experience and verifying them here. All history becomes subjective; in other words there is properly no history, only biography. Every mind must know the whole lesson for itself, - must go over the whole ground. What it does not see, what it does not live, it will not know. (Emerson 15)

Also, like Emerson, Williams believed in self-education. "The world exists for the education of each man," Emerson wrote (14). In Paterson, Williams writes "Be reconciled, poet, with your world, it is the only truth!" (84). Williams is adamant about the necessity of understanding the past, but believes that
understanding must be overlaid on the realities of the present. So Williams crafts a work that incorporates the 19th century pastoral world and reveals the corruption of the 20th century industrial world.
PROSE AND THE SEARCH FOR THE "AUTHENTIC SPIRIT"

Williams revealed his instinct for change, for experimentation grounded in historical knowledge, in the evolution of his views on prose and poetry. "There is nothing in literature but change and change is mockery," he writes in the 1918 prologue to *Kora in Hell: Improvisations*. "I’ll write whatever I damn please, whenever I damn please and as I damn please and it’ll be good if the authentic spirit of change is on it" (13). Williams’ insistence upon taking risks to find an authentic American language is evident even in the title he selected for this collection of short, prose pieces. Kora, the mythical legend of Springtime captured and taken to Hell, represents Williams in the flowering of his own work as a physician and poet. “I thought of myself as Springtime and I felt I was on my way to Hell (but I didn’t go very far),” he said in a 1957 interview (IWWP 29).

Williams spent a year writing the short prose pieces that would become the improvisations, taking
down short recollections and ruminations. Readying the book for publication, he wrote interpretations for most, setting those in italics, and added an intriguing Prologue about the work of modern poets. He finds sustenance for his imagination in the case histories of his patients, in writing about the realities of the lives of the rough-edged working class people he tends. The images come pouring out on paper late into the night, after Williams has finished with the last patient. "They were a reflection of the day's happenings more or less, and what I had to do with them," he says in I Wanted to Write a Poem (27). The details in Kora are commonplace, but enlivened with a pointed spontaneity:

There's the bathtub. Look at it, caustically rejecting its smug proposal. Ponder removedly the herculean task of a bath. There's much camaraderie in filth but it's no' that. And change is lightsome but it's not that either. Fresh linen with a dab here, there of the wet paw serves me better. Take a stripling stroking chin-fuzz, match his heart against that of grandpa watching his silver wane. When these two are compatible I'll plunge in. But where's the edge lifted between sunlight and moonlight. Where does lamplight cease to nick it? Here's hot water. (K 70-71)
Williams paints everyday American images - clothes hanging on the line, the market man wiping his hands on a grimy towel, the sound of a car engine on a smooth road, a record of miscarriages - that are precursors of the scenes in *Paterson*. These prose entries are filled with the "actual" of Williams' life and they are lit with what Williams calls in his prose poem "From: A Folded Skyscraper" (1927): "my fervent, my fierce, anger to have a country" (CP I 276). Breslin calls the improvisations a "literary version of the defining gesture of the heroic figures in *In the American Grain*, who turn their backs on society and moved singlemindedly into the wilderness" (60).

*Kora in Hell* establishes the prose poetry of the immediate here-and-now through the declarative sentence; *Spring and All* and *The Descent of Winter* are distinguished by the separate prose and poem sequences, as if Williams sets them side-by-side to gauge the tension of the partnership. In *Spring and All* and *The Descent of Winter*, there is still a cleavage: "There is no use denying that prose and poetry are not by any means the same IN INTENTION" (CP I 226). Williams
argues here that prose is antipoetical, even though he decried that assumption in later years (SL 263). Not until Paterson is Williams totally freed from old assumptions about prose as antipoetical and clearly committed to the belief that prose and verse are joined into one conceptual poetic language (Bremen 12-20).

Kora in Hell: Improvisations, Spring and All and The Descent of Winter provided Williams with the outlet he needed to throw off the old constricting notions of verse and begin to establish his evolving concept of American poetry. Spring and All affirms the brute, raw, unrelenting force of nature and humanity, the need to move on, burst forth and shed the wintertime of illusions. In Spring and All, Williams creates the world anew just as he is creating a new poetic. The images are organic, recalling once again Williams' connection to the Emersonian view of the world, and harsh. Williams has abandoned the romanticism of his early poems. "The rose is obsolete," (CP I 195) he writes in Spring and All, selecting an overused symbol traditionally associated with romance. The sky is dark and foreboding as humanity awaits a new season.
poems unfold the theme of new life, the farmer in poem III is "pacing through the rain / among his blank fields" (CP I 186). In poem V, "There is nothing in the twist / of the wind but - dashes of cold rain" (CP I 190). In poem VIII, the sunlight "is full of a song / inflated to / fifty pounds pressure." (CP I 196). The earth is literally ready to explode and man with it.

The poems of Spring and All are full of images that fly off in all directions, creating what Breslin calls a "field of action" rather than a singular path (50). That latter style, more refined, will later show up in Paterson in, for instance, the description of the participants in the Sunday park scenes at the opening of Book Two. The narrator approaches the park "concretely" (P 43), seeing girls whose legs work like "pistons too powerful for delicacy" (P 44). He arrives at the top of the falls "breathless, after a hard climb" (P 44). The path is full of "stubble and matted brambles," the grass "file-sharp" (P 47). The images jut up against the prose, which is laid out, as Williams explains in Spring and All as a:

statement of facts concerning emotions, intellectual states, data of all sorts -
technical expositions, jargon, of all sorts -
fictional and other - (219)

Williams refines his definition of prose and poetry, and their interrelation, in *Spring and All*. "Prose has to do with the fact of an emotion; poetry has to do with the dynamization of emotion into a separate form" (219). Poetry is not meant to be inspiration and ecstasy, nor is it meant to be a search for "the beautiful illusion." Instead, he speaks in language traditionally reserved for the idea of marriage: "We are one. Whenever I say, 'I' I mean also, 'you'" (CP I 178). The marriage motif, and the opposite theme of divorce, is carried into *Paterson* through both the juxtaposition of prose and poetry (poetry and prose existing side-by-side) and, as explained earlier, in the prose selections themselves. In, for example, Mrs. Cumming's fall and Sam Patch's fatal leap, Williams explores what happens "when the word has been drained of its meaning" (P 16). That is, when there is no shared language, the people are divorced from knowledge.
Williams begins *Spring and All* with a prose passage that establishes the distinction between the old poetic and the new order. His argument is aimed at those who lament the lack of rhyme and measure in modern poetry:

What do they mean when they say; 'I do not like your poems; you have no faith whatever. You seem neither to have suffered nor, in fact, to have felt anything very deeply. There is nothing appealing in what you say but on the contrary the poems are positively repellent.... Rhyme you may perhaps take away but rhythm! why there is none in your work whatever. Is this what you call poetry? It is the very antithesis of poetry. It is antipoetry. (177)

But in this passage, Williams reminds the reader that he is well aware of the history of verse in America and the necessity of building on the traditions of the past. Williams answers with his own interpretation of the indictment, but leaves himself some room for maneuvering:

Perhaps this noble apostrophe means something terrible for me, I am not certain, but for the moment I interpret it to say: 'You have robbed me. God, I am naked. What shall I do?' - By it they mean that when I have suffered (provided I have not done so as yet) I too shall run for cover; that I too shall seek refuge in fantasy. And mind you, I do not say that I will not. To decorate my age. (177)
Williams suggests in *Spring and All* that the debate over the new order is not about poetry or antipoetry. Rather, it is a struggle to shed worn conventions and unite the writer and the reader in a collective search for new forms. "It is spring. That is to say, it is approaching THE BEGINNING!" (CP I 182)

The image of spring as a fresh start - with the "twiggy / stuff of bushes and small trees / with dead, brown leaves under them / leafless vines-" coming to life and entering "the new world naked" (183) - is extended to the life of the poet and the poem. The poet embraces the imagination, stripping off the trappings of the old order to create the world anew. Williams devotes much of the prose sections of *Spring and All* to defining the role of prose and poetry in the imagination:

> Poetry has to do with the crystallization of the imagination-the perfection of new forms as additions to nature-Prose may follow to enlighten but poetry-
> (CPI 226)

Three decades after writing *Spring and All*, Williams acknowledged the experimental nature of the poem, calling it a "travesty" on the then-current rage to mix typographical forms (IWWP 37). But it is in this
volume that he begins to expound on his belief in "no ideas but in things" (P 6), and ponders the role of prose in that pursuit. Donald Markos identifies the form Williams uses in *Spring and All* as a "a fresh response to reality" involving "abrupt juxtapositions and associations as well as disruptions of conventional logic and grammar" (96). These are the forms Williams will build on when he gets to *Paterson*.

Williams uses *The Descent of Winter* to interpret through prose the American experience and the role of art in contemporary life. Fairfield is, in some ways, another Paterson, a place where the natural world collides with industrial "progress":

Fairfield is the place where the October marigolds go over into the empty lot with dead grass like Polish children's hair and the nauseous, the stupefying monotony of decency is dead, unkindled even by art or anything - dead: by God because Fairfield is alive, coming strong. (297)

As he does in *Paterson*, Williams places images of the organic world, those facts of the emotion, against those of the emerging industrial Fairfield. A "dell with a pretty stream in it" runs up against the "board fence of the Ajax Aniline Dye Works with red and purple
refuse dribbling out ragged and oily under the lower fence boards” (297). This is the world into which Dolores Marie Pischak is born in 1927. Her life opens with the doctor, in this case Williams, filling in the particulars of her birth on her birth certificate:

"Born, September 15, 1927, 2nd child, wt. 6 lbs. 2 ozs” (296). Williams is matter-of-fact about the realities of the life she will live. "This is the world," he writes. "Here one breathes and the dignity of man holds on” (298). Fairfield, like Paterson, is built on greed. Fairfield's men may "do as they please" but they also "learn the necessity and the profit of order” (299). The working classes enjoy a good, if not expansive, life, but there is obvious worker discontent:

On hot days
the sewing machine
whirling

in the next room
in the kitchen

and men at the bar
talking of the strike
and cash (299)
The historical importance of workers' strikes, both in Fairfield and in Paterson, is crucial to the development of the exploitation themes, and, by extension, the theme of divorce from the land, in the prose sections of both *The Descent of Winter* and *Paterson*. In *The Descent of Winter*, the United States could be an example of a working Soviet state; instead it is a "soviet state decayed away in a misconception of richness" (308), with the workers disconnected from the natural world in their manmade cars, tunnels and offices. That is the same theme Klaus Ehrens drives home in his sermon in Book II of *Paterson*:

Great riches shall be yours! I wasn't born here. I was born in what we call over here the Old Country. But it's the same people, the same kind of people there as here and they're up to the same kind of tricks as over here - only, there isn't as much money over there - and that makes the difference. (66-67)

Williams places the sermon on the evils of money next to prose sections that focus, once again, on Alexander Hamilton and his creation of the Federal Reserve System. Unlike Hamilton, who envisions an America made great by industrialization, Ehrens rails
against the continuing acquisition of money. The New World is no different than the Old World, he asserts - except in the amount of money that can be made. Williams makes that point through the prose sections on Hamilton, who would harness the country's abundant natural resources, i.e., the Great Falls of the Passaic, for a great manufacturing center. The wild beauty and chaos of the falls, the crashing of the rushing water on rocks that is to Williams a cry for a common language, represent to Hamilton only potential for commerce. Hamilton, whose commercial hopes for Paterson never fully materialized, holds a vision of the land similar to that of the Puritans. The ground, alien and foreign, must be tamed and so Hamilton "planned a stone aqueduct following a proposed boulevard, as the crow flies, to Newark, with outlets every mile or two along the river for groups of factories" (P 73).

Here Williams recalls the importance of understanding history as he juxtaposes Hamilton against the agrarian thinkers Madison and Jefferson. Williams believes agricultural commodities would have been
emphasized over manufacturing had Jefferson's ideals triumphed over Hamilton's belief in a strong federal government. Then Hamilton could not have destroyed the natural beauty of the region in his drive to turn the Falls into "a great manufacturing center, a great Federal City, to supply the needs of the country" (P 70).

Without the existence of Hamilton or someone who shared his commercial philosophy, Dolores’ Fairfield would have been part of a tangible, natural world, one not simply distinguished by storefronts such as the “Peoples Loan and Service, Money to Loan” and the “Fairfield Bowling and Billiard Academy” (315-316). Her life circumscribed by commerce, she knows the natural world mainly through the scene she recalls the old man painting on the mirror behind the bar in the family saloon:

The rivers were painted flat on the glass, wonderful rivers where she wanted to be. Some day she wanted to go to that place and see it. Like the song she remembered in school and she always wanted them to sing when you could ask what song you wanted sung, 'Come again soon and you shall hear sung the tale of those green little islands.' She always wanted to hear the rest of it but there was never any more. (CP I 309-310)
Williams employs a strategy of recapturing the past through a painting as one way of showing how profoundly humanity is affected by the altered landscape. Because Hamilton imposed an industrial life on the region, nature is remembered but can no longer be visualized, and therefore articulated, except through art and imagination. But the painting serves another vital function, as a vehicle for describing the language. Williams noted in Spring and All that "it is the imagination on which reality rides" (225). From the description of Dolores' childhood memories, Williams moves into a discussion of Shakespeare, the writer who "escaped from the world into the natural world of his mind" (CP I 311). Here we have an expansion of Williams' belief in "No idea but in things": "The only human value of anything, writing included, is intense vision of the facts, add to that by saying the truth and action upon them, - clear into the machine of absurdity to a core that is covered" (CP I 312). The experiments with prose in the books that precede
Paterson clear the way for him to drive toward the accurate, true core, without apology.
Determined, as Williams' biographer Paul Mariani writes, to define the "radiant gist" of American culture "from Eddie Cantor to the shadow of H.D., newspapers, anything" (Mariani 491-492), Williams accumulated hundreds of notes for Paterson that could qualify as the "intense vision of the facts." These become the prose pathways to the language that should be recognizable to Americans living in his time. While some of the key historical passages have already been analyzed in this paper, it is important also to examine how Williams wove in modern prose passages, including letters and conversations, to show an America of many voices. His vision reflected an American culture in transition, where men and women, black and white, had to build lives in a changing, technological world.

While Williams set forth the theme of Paterson as a "man like a city," he understood that to do that, he must also tell "her story" as well. This is important as he sets out to heal the divorce of modern times -
language. If there is a Dr. Paterson, there must also be a Mrs. Paterson, and if the history of male-female relations is complicated then he would confront that history rather than turning his back. He employs the letters of Marcia Nardi to assert that voice in Paterson. Williams introduces the female voice quickly (P 7), as if to offset the masculine superiority of the "man like a city" surrounded by "innumerable women" (P 7). Williams does not place a signature on this particular fragment of the Nardi correspondence, known as the "Cress" or "C." letters, that are scattered in Books I and II. But the letter-writer is obviously female and meant to intrude upon the lofty dreams of the male giant.

The tone of the letter fragment suggests the writer is a feisty supplicant, one who realizes that she is asking for help but also steeling herself to turn away the "professional do-gooders and the like" (P 7). This letter foreshadows the finale of Paterson, Book II, when "C." - a signature Williams borrowed from Chaucer’s Troilus and Cressida - delivers the angry, protracted lecture on "woman's wretched position in
society” (P 87). The first letter is important to establish the feminine voice in Paterson, and women’s place in the search for a true language. In that first fragment “C.” demurs, seeing herself, at least in the presence of a well-known older male poet, as "more the woman than the poet." But the letter represents the first seeds of a feminine backlash against being "innumerable" women to one man. If he does not understand completely this desire to escape traditional roles, Dr. P at least comprehends its significance as it relates to the themes of exploitation and disintegration that he weaves through Paterson. The first snippet of the Nardi correspondence, initially straddling the passages on the male giant of a city and the female park, serves as a bridge to connect the sexes. It is part of the language that Williams must explicate in order to eventually be able to articulate the Beautiful Thing of Book III and come to terms with the world.

In that first letter fragment, Williams juxtaposes the female’s stated desire for human companionship against his thoughts that "rise rock-thwarted and turn
aside but forever strain forward" (P 8). Shortly thereafter, he continues his description of the female Paterson, asleep, bedecked with pearls at her ankles. She is formidable even as she sleeps, with her hair stretching out "monstrous" into the back country, suggesting the power that she wields (P 9).

Through the prose of Cress and her statements about the treatment of women, Williams is able to give voice and weight in the verse passages to the "girls from families that have decayed," the wives of the African chief and Mrs. Sarah Cumming. As discussed earlier, the inclusion of the prose section on the death of Mrs. Cumming provides Williams with an example of "false language." The writing is stilted, and Williams expects the modern reader to be jarred by the lofty description of Mrs. Cumming as one who was "blessed with a flattering prospect of no common share of Temporal felicity and usefulness in the sphere which Providence had assigned her" (P 14). But coming so soon after the Nardi introductory letter, the point is driven home even further. Sankey quotes from an earlier
draft that suggests Williams' thinking in crafting the poetry following the prose section:

What was that cry? What was that fall? Nobody saw her. It was, or was it? the laughter of the waterfall - a true language she could understand,

Or was it nothing in the blood but an emptiness that drew her in? a language she could understand- (Buffalo MS)

The question of accident, murder or suicide is never adequately answered in Paterson. But, Williams notes, "at least / it settled it for her" (P 15). The dilemma for 20th century women, as Nardi's letters suggest, is even more complex. Like Mrs. Cumming, they teeter on the precipice, unwilling to share too many confidences but demanding of men (of Dr. Paterson) a place in the world that includes acknowledgment of equality of relationships and expression of the imagination. Otherwise, Nardi believes, Williams' quest in Paterson for a new language and poetic is flawed:

You might as well take all your own literature and everyone else's and toss it into one of those big garbage trucks of the Sanitation Department, so long as the people with the top-cream minds and the 'finer' sensibilities use those minds and sensibilities not to make themselves more
humane human beings than the average person, but merely as means of ducking responsibility toward a better understanding of their fellow men, except theoretically - which doesn't mean a God damned thing. (P 82)

The tension between the theoretical and the actual is explored more fully in Book III when Williams and "Dr. Paterson" enter the Paterson Public Library. But there is a thematic purpose in Williams' ending of Book II with the prose letter, of showing what he explained in a letter to Horace Gregory was "an identity between prose and verse, not an antithesis" (SL 265). The letter leaves open the suggestion that Dr. P may be too wrapped up in his search for the true language and it places the question of female roles front and center. "Here the tail has tried to wag the dog," he wrote in that Gregory letter (SL 266). The Cress excerpts ensure that readers understand the power of the "tail" (tale) from the female perspective as it relates to the shaping of modern poetic form.

Shortly after, Williams introduces two important dogs in prose passages that illuminate his themes of possession of and marriage to the landscape. The "new-washed" Collie bitch is leashed and at the command of
his well-kept owner, while Musty, the mischievous dog in heat, has escaped the neighbor and become pregnant (P 53-54). Sankey sees the juxtaposition of the two pets as a "half-comic examination of the topic of sacred and profane love" (81). But the sections must also be examined in light of the preceding lover sequence and the intermittent Cress letters. Musty is akin to the working classes, the "great beast" lolling at the park and copulating in loveless unions. But she is also representative of the insistent woman of the Cress letters, the "straight from the shoulder" female who intends to escape historical boundaries established by Dr. P and others. Cress is determined to unravel the mystery of the human relationship, not simply the sexual union but the core that accounts for friendship:

That's why all that fine talk of yours about woman's need to 'sail free in her own element' as a poet, becomes nothing but empty rhetoric in the light of your behavior towards me. No woman will ever be able to do that, completely, until she is able first to 'sail free in her own element' in living itself - which means in her relationships with men even before she can do so in her relationships with other women. (P 87)
Nardi suggested the roots of her attack went far more deeply than Williams' ego. She illuminated this issue in her own correspondence with Theodora Graham years after her letters appeared in Paterson:

But those letters had nothing to do with his male 'pretensions,' of which I was not especially aware; for, as you must have noticed already and certainly will notice if you read my letters again, what I resented was his double-dealing in responding with sensitivity and understanding to the thoughts and ideas and awarenesses that I expressed in my poetry, but completely ignoring them where my private life was concerned and even abandoning me for my inability, in living itself, to cope with the very same experiences that inspired those poems of mine which he admired the most! (O'Neil xxiv)

The letters speak of an altered American landscape between the sexes, and of the multi-layered issues involving friendship, the historical role of women, and use of the language itself.

Just as the Cress letters provide a key to Williams' thinking about a changing American poetic, the prose sections of Paterson, Book IV dealing with invention are aimed at unshackling the language from the past. As prologue to the letters from Allen Ginsberg, Williams hails the life of Madame Curie:
For years a nurse-girl
an unhatched sun corroding
her mind, eating away a rind
of impermanence, through books
remorseless (171)

And then the verse following the first Ginsberg letter:

knowledge, the contaminant

Uranium, the complex atom, breaking
down, a city in itself, that complex
atom, always breaking down
to lead.
   But giving off that, to an
exposed plate, will reveal (P 177)

Ginsberg, like Curie and Williams, is also an
inventor. In his first letter, he questions Williams’
form and provides a clue to the inheritors of Williams’
poetics:

I do not know if you will like my poetry or
not - that is, how far your own inventive
persistence excludes less independent or
youthful attempts to perfect, renew,
transfigure, and make contemporarily real an
old style or lyric machinery, which I use to
record the struggle with imagination of the
clouds, with which I have been concerned. (P
173)

Ginsberg’s effort at invention, his desire to
invent “some kind of new speech” (p 173) hearkens
back to Williams’ admonition to “be reconciled, poet, with your world!” (P 84). And so it is the younger Ginsberg who informs Williams about a part of Paterson that the elder poet has perhaps not seen, filled with “negroes, gypsies, an incoherent bartender in a taproom overhanging the river, filled with gas, ready to explode, the window facing the river painted over so that the people can’t see in” (P 193). Part of the new generation, Ginsberg will build on the foundation laid by Williams but develop his own poetics.
CONCLUSION

Ginsberg and his contemporaries are the inheritors of Williams' search for the true American language. They understood, even if interviewer Mike Wallace did not, what Williams meant when he says "We poets have to talk in a language which is not English" (P 222). Williams' crafting of a prose/poetry form is a "sample of the American idiom" (P 222), he told Wallace in a 1957 interview in the New York Post, and that is why Williams found it so crucial to work into Paterson a segment of that newspaper interview.

The question-answer format of the interview is about invention, which is what Paterson and the works leading up to it, have been about. As Williams noted in Paterson, Book II:

> Without invention nothing is well spaced, unless the mind change, unless the stars are new measured, according to their relative positions, the line will not change, the necessity will not matriculate; unless there is a new mind there cannot be a new line, the old will go on repeating itself with recurring deadliness: (P 50)
Invention, gained from three decades of experimentation with a new form that would illuminate and illustrate what Americans are all about, leads Williams to find that new American idiom in places other poets may have ignored. He finds that idiom in the letter written to Williams’ maid, Gladys Enalls, by her girlfriend, Dolly. The jazzy letter provides contrast and opposition to the literate man in the Library of Paterson, Book III, as well as the literate man of the interview. It is another woman's voice, but it is one that is driven by ethnic and class distinctions that Williams saw as crucial to his search for the true language. The language is colloquial, the punctuation free-form, starting with the salutary "Hi Kid" (P 124). In the letter, Dolly writes of parties, drinking to excess, and a list of indiscretions that manifests itself as a catalog of babies on the way. Most importantly, there is a new language: "Tell Raymond I said I bubetut hatche isus cashutote / Just a new way of talking kid. It is called (Tut) maybe you heard of it. Well here / hoping you can read it" (P 125).
In those be-bop prose lines, Williams hears the poetry of the 20th century, just as he heard it in the prose of *Kora in Hell: Improvisations*, in *Spring and All* and *The Descent of Winter*. It was the kind of language and rhythms that he told Boyle he had been alert to all his life - "the music of events, of words, of the speech of people about me" (SL 131).

Like the protagonist of *Paterson*, who makes his allegorical way to the sea and redemption, so Williams uses prose to redeem for the reader the world as it is. Prose is a way for Williams to turn, damp from his immersion in "the blood dark sea" (P 201), inland, toward Camden, Whitman’s home (A 392), and America. The prose that is so much a part of *Paterson* resonates, like the poetry, with American symbol and syntax.
APPENDIX

Works by William Carlos Williams:

A  The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams
CP 1 The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams
DW The Descent of Winter
K Kora in Hell
IAG In the American Grain
IWWP I Wanted to Write a Poem: The Autobiography of the Works of A Poet
P Paterson
SA Spring and All
SE Selected Essays
SL Selected Letters


VITA

Mary Carolyn Click