The Literary Heritage of New Jersey

THE NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL SERIES

Edited by

RICHARD M. HUBER WHEATON J. LANE

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Volume 20
The New Jersey Historical Series

The Literary Heritage of New Jersey

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NATHANIEL BURT
A. WALTON LITZ

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FOREWORD

Many tracks will be left by the New Jersey Tercentenary celebration, but few will be larger than those made by the New Jersey Historical Series. The Series is a monumental publishing project, the product of a remarkable collaborative effort between public and private enterprise.

New Jersey has needed a series of books about itself. The 300th anniversary of the State is a fitting time to publish such a series. It is to the credit of the State's Tercentenary Commission that this series has been created.

In an enterprise of such scope, there must be many contributors. Each of these must give considerably of himself if the enterprise is to succeed. The New Jersey Historical Series, the most ambitious publishing venture ever undertaken about a state, was conceived by a committee of Jerseymen—Julian P. Boyd, Wesley Frank Craven, John T. Cunningham, David S. Davies, and Richard P. McCormick. Not only did these men outline the need for such an historic venture; they also aided in the selection of the editors of the series.

Both jobs were well done. The volumes speak for themselves. The devoted and scholarly services of Richard M. Huber and Wheaton J. Lane, the editors, are a part of every book in the series. The editors have been aided in their work by two fine assistants, Elizabeth Jackson Holland and Bertha DeGraw Miller.

To D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc. my special thanks for recognizing New Jersey's need and for bringing their skills and publishing wisdom to bear upon the printing and distributing of the New Jersey Historical Series.

My final and most heartfelt thanks must go to Laurence B. Holland, Nathaniel Burt and A. Walton Litz, who accepted my invitation to write *The Literary Heritage of New Jersey,* doing so at great personal sacrifice and without thought of material gain. We are richer by their scholarship. We welcome this important contribution to an understanding of our State.

RICHARD J. HUGHES
Governor of the
State of New Jersey

January, 1964

PREFACE

Scholars wise in the ways of book titles offer more in their books than their titles promise. The editors' special preface to this volume in the New Jersey Historical Series tries to answer some interesting questions about the title of this collection of three essays. If the Preface raises more questions than it answers about the relation of state to national literature, so much the better.

In a sense not used here, the title, *The Literary Heritage of New Jersey,* could be defined as a literary tradition which is passed on from generation to generation, a heritage involving materials, style, and viewpoint which current New Jersey writers inherit by virtue of their birth or conditioning. If the term is used in this sense, the editors question whether there is such a thing as *the* literary heritage of New Jersey. In fact, we doubt if there is *a* literary heritage of New Jersey. Sometimes we have to assure ourselves that there is even a state of New Jersey—if we think of the word "state" as a condition of mind or feeling. With northern New Jersey lying in the lap of the colossus New York City, southern New Jersey pointing like a yearning flower towards the sunshine and sustenance of Philadelphia, with no statewide personal income or sales tax nor any nationally known newspaper to keep us informed about political conditions in Trenton, with each municipality suspicious of the other, we sometimes wonder if New Jersey is a state at all, or not rather 567 active municipalities gloriously dedicated to their own community welfare and community freedom.

Lest anyone assume that New Jersey is peculiar, there are but a few states in America that can claim an inherited literary tradition. From a different angle, there are many literary heritages in the American experience, from the revolt-from-the-village literature to the moribund proletarian novel. But the specific literary heritage of a state can be more fruitfully examined from the wider construct of the region. Unquestionably the most distinct region in American literature has been the South, with its tribal customs and dialects, its smoldering moods and Negro anxieties, its social distinctions and ancestor worship. The literary heritage of the West has its splashes of local color, its frontier tradition of wide-open spaces and tall tales, its free, fearless cowboy, now romanticized on everyone's television screen.

New Jersey is the traveled corridor of the Middle Atlantic States region. The literary heritage of the Middle Atlantic States is all American literature. New Jersey writers do not shape their art from a body of regional literature, taking their values and viewpoints from their creative forebears in New York, Philadelphia, or Newark. They write as Americans, not as Southerners or Westerners. Whether regional or cosmopolitan, Colorado or New Jersey, literary quality depends less on the nature of the materials and more on how the artist shapes those materials. Whether chasing a New England whale, describing the New York City Bowery, or sketching a sleepy southern town, great art begins with the particular and reaches for the universal, roots its story in specific time, place, and character but reveals through them the truth of the human condition.

By "the literary heritage of New Jersey" we mean a body of imaginative literature which has been created by novelists and poets who can be said to be New Jersey writers. But we also had to ask ourselves (where others too often have not): Who is a New Jersey writer—or an Illinois or Delaware writer, for that matter? Can F. Scott Fitzgerald, whose massive social class insecurities flowered into literature at Princeton University, be claimed as a

New Jersey novelist? What of Walt Whitman, who lived the twenty or so sickly years of his life in Camden? Or sometime resident James Gould Cozzens, or John O'Hara, or Sinclair Lewis, who worked as a janitor at Upton Sinclair's utopian Helicon Hall in Englewood? Flowing in the other direction, what of Stephen Crane and Edmund Wilson, New Jersey born and raised, who then moved elsewhere?

William Faulkner is clearly a Mississippi writer working within the southern region and Delaware-born J. P. Marquand is a Boston novelist working in the New England, or at least East Coast, tradition. What relates both these writers specifically to a state is that their values were shaped by that state and its region and they exploited the materials that the state and region offered. To grow up and live in America is to be shaped by a complexity of forces, voluntary and imposed. The artist is a product of a rural or urban background, a Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jew, or agnostic, rich or poor, upper-class or lower, responsive to an authoritarian or permissive father, and on and on, until the forces sculpture that cherished individual (cherished for his art) who can put words together until they come alive with the passion and meaning of life. First novels testify to the formative years. In this process of creating the imaginative writer, the state and region play their part.

Thus, to ask who is a New Jersey writer is to answer by suggesting that the degree to which the culture and physical environment of a state shapes the artist, coupled with the degree to which he uses the materials of his state and region, is the degree to which he may be considered a product of his state-region. Using this formula as a guideline rather than a precise statistical measurement (for one can think of immediate exceptions), it is clear that the four poets discussed in the following three essays are New Jersey artists. William Carlos Williams was born in Rutherford and spent the greater part of his life living and working there. Henry Van Dyke was born and raised in Germantown, Pennsylvania, but spent most of his

working life in Princeton. Reversing the process, Richard Watson Gilder was born and raised in Bordentown, but lived most of his working life elsewhere. Philip Freneau was born in New York City and raised in Mount Pleasant (now Matawan) and spent his adult life alternately living in and leaving his ancestral home. All are New Jersey writers either through conditioning or through their use of New Jersey materials.

One more question may interest the thoughtful reader. Why not tell the chronological story of the literary heritage of New Jersey, in the sense of a body of imaginative literature relating to the state, from the eighteenth-century Quaker John Woolman to such contemporary native-born writers as Norman Mailer and Allen Ginsberg? The risk is a dull catalogue of novelists and poets with insufficient space to reach beyond anything but a superficial recital of facts. There is no interpretive theme in New Jersey literature. There is no constant reference to which writers were forced to relate themselves, such as the Negro in the South or space in the West or the Puritan tradition in New England.

Our other three books on the arts in the New Jersey Historical Series are a chronological survey of their subjects. Was there not a danger of cataloguing drowsiness and superficiality here? The illustrations of painting and sculpture, the decorative arts, and architecture can speak for themselves. The authors of these books guide their readers through a history of their subject by directly referring to and then commenting on their illustrations. The author of a book on literature enjoys no such advantage. For the general reader he must offer a space-consuming description of the subject before he may begin to comment on the novel or the poem. In the New Jersey Historical Series the other books on the arts point out that New Jersey has been a record of American artistic life. New Jersey imaginative writing might well be a record of American literature. Such a book may some day be written. We think the plan of this book offers more meaningful insights in the space available.

Here are three essays discussing four poets working in three centuries which offer exciting opportunities for comparison. The four poets reflect a wide-ranging diversity of attitudes toward New Jersey, poetic materials, literary style, and philosophical viewpoint. For example, one problem in understanding our twentieth-century poets is that we never read the poetry from which they were revolting. It is similar to trying to understand the 1920's without absorbing the Victorianism against which so many people in the 1920's were rebelling. To follow Nathaniel Burt's essay on the two poets Van Dyke and Gilder with A. Walton Litz's discussion of William Carlos Williams is to understand in one sitting much about contemporary poetry in the perspective of the genteel tradition from which Williams and other poets were revolting. The comparison is made more consistent by the fact that all three were not starving poets in a garret but famous in their own time, men of substance and responsibility in their communities whose lives were full with other interests and activities.

We welcome the opportunity to extend our warmest appreciation to Bernard Bush, Nicholas Dewey, Richard Durnin, Nelson Adkins, and M. L. Rosenthal for their sensitive suggestions and criticisms in the creation of this book.

The editors hope that in so brief a space these fine essays will reveal to their readers something about the nature of American literature through an understanding of our four poets from New Jersey.

Princeton, New Jersey — RICHARD M. HUBER

June, 1964 — WHEATON J. LANE

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BY LAURENCE B. HOLLAND

PHILIP FRENEAU

POET IN THE NEW NATION

NEW JERSEY'S first significant creative writer was a poet, farmer, and sea captain who flourished during and immediately after the American Revolution but died, in 1832, in virtual oblivion. Yet ever since the Duyckinck brothers sought to revive his reputation in their *Cyclopedia of American Literature* in 1855, most students of American culture have accorded that Jersey poet and sea captain an important position in literature of the American Revolution and the early decades of the new nation. As poet, satirical propagandist, and journalist, Philip Freneau enlisted the arts of verse and prose in the service of the Revolution, and afterward he kept responding to the pressures of the revolutionary heritage. He did not abandon the invective he had once directed against British generals, Tories, and the Crown but after 1783 kept posting storm warnings against the threat of monarchy and directed the barbs of satire at the Federalists, the policies of Alexander Hamilton, and the principles of President John Adams. Moreover, he examined manners and institutions in early America from the standpoint of Jeffersonian republicanism, introduced romantic modes of feeling into American poetry, and sought materials for his art in the native setting and in Indian customs as well as in the controversies of American politics. While

cautious, genteel critics of the nineteenth century often glanced in scorn at Freneau's belligerence and the bluntness of his satire, cultural nationalists in the field of letters have celebrated his discovery of the American scene and his commitment to democracy.

Yet Freneau is not significant chiefly for his achievement as a writer; his talents as poet and journalist were decidedly limited. He is important for the fullness with which his work displays the problems that beset the American imagination. His career reflects certain ambivalences inhering in the American tradition in his own time and since, the predicament particularly of a writer in New Jersey whose position as a writer in his local region (his family plantation, Mount Pleasant, near Matawan) was no more securely settled than his position on the national scene. A statement of the Duyckincks, though meant to assure readers that Freneau's works would survive because they were planted so deeply in the life and events of his day, actually defines a situation which Freneau and other American writers have longed for but seldom secured. The Duyckincks declared: "The genius that has no local habitation for its muse, no . . . relation to time and place to-day . . . will be, in sporting language, nowhere tomorrow." [1] In other words, the writer needs a fertile "place" or region and a fruitful "time" in which to practice his art.

It was precisely the support of so settled a "local habitation"—and so reassuring an involvement in the events of his own time—that Freneau could *not* find in the America of the 1760's where he began writing or the America of 1832 when he died, nor could he find it in the New Jersey where he was raised and which he later chose to make his home. Monmouth County did not afford writers the encouragement of a secure and stimulating regional culture. The capital cities nearby—New York and Philadelphia—seemed more promising to the writer then as now, but the new nation's thriving cities did not hand Freneau ready-made opportunities for certain success. Instead he had to seek for such an environ-

ment—indeed try to make one for himself and for his art.

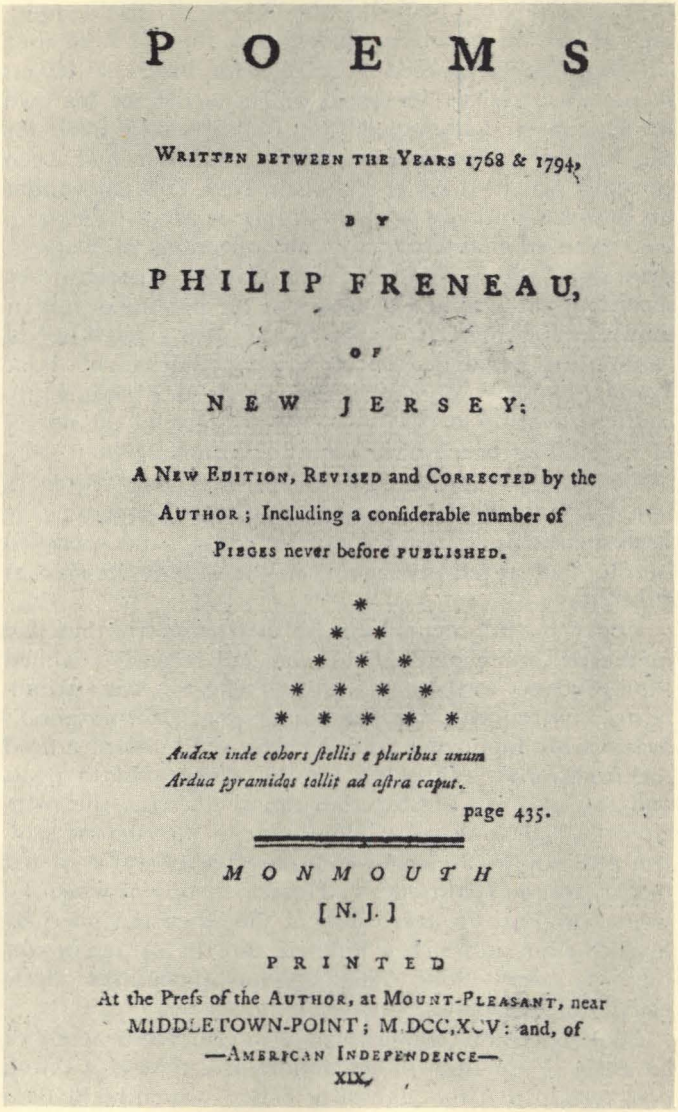
His failure is instructive, yet it is equally important to recognize that his effort to find and shape a suitable environment is the characteristic American enterprise, the archetypal American undertaking. He might today envy the Southern writers their tradition, sanctioned by shared nostalgias and might-have-beens, by the sense of tragic defeat during the Civil War, and by their cult of codes of value and conduct. Or he might have envied Whitman whose confidence was buttressed by the surge of power, deep intellectual ferment, and aspiration known to New Yorkers and other Americans in the mid-nineteenth century. Freneau did somewhat envy and resent the New Englanders of his own time; their activities were sanctioned by intellectual and institutional traditions of long standing in their region. Nevertheless Freneau shared with such American writers the need to shape the social and cultural environment, but without their viable traditions and more fruitful relations to "place" and "time" his need was more acute. And the limitations of his talent simply added to his deprivations. His efforts are almost nakedly representative of the efforts of American writers since his time to render their environment fruitful for the creative arts.

Freneau's imagination was gripped throughout his career by two governing figures, two complex images or symbols which have long been dominant in American mythology and accordingly important in its culture. One is a pastoral figure, the American Landscape. The Landscape is not the mere scene itself but a combination of fact and legend, of actual geography and imaginative response to it, which measured the latitude and longitude of Freneau's "place." The Landscape includes three segments or features. One was the Atlantic to the east and its exotic islands and trading ports within its far horizon. A second is the forest wilderness to the west. The third is the newly founded agrarian society on the seaboard, with its community of provincial nymphs and

swains. Freneau celebrated this community and the entire Landscape in his first published poem, "The American Village." The other figure is an historical one, the image of an emerging nation or national destiny, a Destiny and Mission taking shape in the crucible of events and the fluctuations of historical change. This is the revolutionary nationalism which was a dream or myth before it became a fact and which Freneau termed early in his career "The Rising Glory of America."

Freneau's attempt to make his place as a writer in American society was inseparable from his conception of the American Landscape, and his attempt to enlist his art in the affairs of his day was inseparable from his conception of America's revolutionary destiny, the "Rising Glory." When he assembled his poems for a revised edition in 1795, Freneau took pains to specify on the titlepage that the volume had a "local habitation," being published in Monmouth, New Jersey, "At the Press of the Author, at Mount-Pleasant, near Middletown-Point." And he dated the volume (as Whitman later was to date some of his poems) in an American chronology, the nineteenth year in the brief history of "American Independence."

Freneau's family had resided for some sixteen years on their plantation when Freneau enrolled in the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) in 1768. Pierre Freneau, a successful importer and shipper in the family concern, moved his family from New York City shortly after Philip was born in 1752, when an outbreak of smallpox prompted his father to leave the commercial and cosmopolitan center he preferred and to build a home on his wife's family's large estate in New Jersey. He continued his commercial activities—a saw mill at Monmouth and a copper mine at Simsbury were among his interests—and invested in lands in New York. A large acreage at Mount Pleasant was farmed with the help of Negro slaves. He was less prosperous in the years immediately preceding his death in 1767 (and he left a



POEMS

WRITTEN BETWEEN THE YEARS 1768 & 1794,

BY

PHILIP FRENEAU,

OF

NEW JERSEY;

A NEW EDITION, REVISED and CORRECTED by the AUTHOR; Including a conſiderable number of PIECES never before PUBLISHED.

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Audax inde cohors ſtellis e pluribus unum
Ardua pyramidos tollit ad aſtra caput.

page 435.

MONMOUTH

[N. J.]

PRINTED

At the Preſs of the AUTHOR, at MOUNT-PLEASANT, near MIDDLETOWN-POINT; M.DCC,XCV: and, of —AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE— XIX.

Title page of Freneaus's *Poems Written Between the Years 1768 and 1794*
Courtesy Princeton University Library

debt of £1300), but he bequeathed his family sizable holdings which left no doubt that Philip, the oldest of four children, would proceed to college, for Pierre, a devout man with a respect for books and a facility of his own for languages, had hoped that Philip would train for the ministry. The young's boy's education had been carefully provided for at schools in New York and under his parent's guidance in their library at Mount Pleasant. Remnants of that library in the collections of Rutgers, Princeton, and the Monmounth County Historical Association, autographed by either of the parents or one or more of the children, testify to the easy availability of stimulating reading: the devotional writing of Isaac Watts, the plays of Shakespeare, and such eighteenth-century favorites as the essays of Addison and the poetry of Pope. The nearby Mattisonia Grammar School, conducted by a young theology student, Alexander Mitchell, and his mentor, the Reverend William Tennent, gave Freneau his final preparation for college and qualified him for "advanced placement" in the sophomore class at Princeton.

Under its president John Witherspoon, the Scottish divine renowned in England who had recently assumed the presidency of the new college, Princeton was a stimulating environment for the young poet. Witherspoon's lectures on Eloquence and on Moral Philosophy fired the traditional enthusiasm for the classical Latin poets and infused into Presbyterian moral doctrine the principles of "common sense" dominant in the current Scottish philosophy. Freneau's collegiate poetry was modeled in part on the Latin odes of Horace, a copy of which he owned, and on the renditions of the Augustan poets by English translators. He emulated also the contemporary English poets—Pope chiefly—who themselves drew heavily on the pastoral tradition.

Confidence and melancholy are intermixed in many of his early productions. The confidence is that of a young poet certain that the "Power of Fancy" which he invokes is in tune with the orders of the universe (the "Fancies"

or "Ideas of the Almighty mind"). The melancholy is that of a young man who is sensitive to the mutability of temporal life, to the hand of time that threatens even the "hoary headed pyramids of Egypt," the "insatiate tooth of time" which reduces man's monuments to "low ruins" in "The Deserted Farm House." [2]

Freneau's vein of melancholy was genuine and also in keeping with popular tastes and the best poetic practice in the eighteenth century, and his confidence was that of an eager young man exercising his talent and seriously committing himself to a vocation. But not all his collegiate productions were solemn. Freneau's one extended piece of fiction was a comic production written jointly with his classmate, the future novelist Hugh Henry Brackenridge, entitled "Father Bombo's Pilgrimage to Mecca and Arabia." It is a loose-jointed, boisterous mock adventure in the genre of Fielding and Cervantes, drawing for comedy on roadside and tavern scenes in the vicinity of Princeton and New Brunswick, which sprang from the hothouse rivalries of competitive campus literary groups. Freneau helped to revive one such institution —the Plain Dealing Society. Its founders, notably James Madison, the future President of the United States, and its new name, The American Whig Society, indicate how closely campus literary life then was involved in the political debates which intensified in the decades following the Stamp Act Crisis of 1765 and the Boston Massacre in 1770.

The Whig Society's rivals, in the Cliosophic Society, were of Tory cast, and Freneau and his cohorts castigated them in satiric diatribes which pit a vaguely defined patriotism against the archetypal moral villainies of their opponents.[3] But while these productions display more political vehemence than political theory, the controversies which were to produce the American Revolution were of vital concern to the campus community, where President Witherspoon (who was himself to be a signer of the Declaration of Independence) alerted undergraduate minds to new currents in moral philosophy and

political thought. The two most ambitious (and first published) of Freneau's poems show that America's destiny was a matter of deep concern to the young poet while revealing also what were some of the problems facing an imaginative artist who was engaged by the aspirations of provincial culture and the emerging nation.

Of these, the first written was a joint production with Hugh Henry Brackenridge, written for their graduation exercises, which Brackenridge delivered at Princeton's commencement in 1771. In it three pastoral figures celebrate the "Rising Glory of America," surveying swiftly such matters as the origins of the Indians, the discovery of the continent, and the promised future, in terms long familiar to colonial historians and preachers who first traced the main contours of American mythology.

One Acasto speaks first, invoking an "adventurous muse" to "attempt a theme/More new, more noble and more flush of fame/Than all that went before," and he concludes the poem with a vision of the Christian New Jerusalem that "Shall grace our earth,—perhaps this land," prophesying the "universal peace" and "future years of bliss" that the world, and British America, will then enjoy. Earlier one Eugenio has sketched various theories of the origins of the Indians (including the notion that they are remnants of tribes inhabiting a "primaeval land now sunk and lost" beneath the Atlantic, the remains of which are visible in the British Isles and such exotic places as Bermuda and the Canary Islands) only to have one Leander reject them scoffingly as inane "sophistry." Leander favors Carthaginian origins for Latin American Indians and hints at an independent creation for the North American tribes! With more serious intent the speakers distinguish the "rapacious" greed for gold and the vengeful inhumanity of the Spanish conquistadors from the admirable motives of such British explorers and settlers as John Cabot and William Penn. Also they commemorate the valor by which enemy Indians (with "vengeful malice arm'd") and the Canadian French were subdued. Next they celebrate "Fair

agriculture" and the "neat simplicity and rustic bliss" of rural life. Then they praise "Commerce" whose "adventurous" sailing ships and trade keep mankind from reverting to savagery by rendering men "social and refined." Before prophesying the eventual Millennium, they celebrate Science in the person of Benjamin Franklin and the "sweet liberty" that supports genius in America, and they foresee "Freedom's established reign" in British America, when the Ohio and Mississippi valleys will teem with "states not less in fame/Than Greece and Rome of old!" [4]

"The Rising Glory of America" has the freshness of a poem tuned to the excitement of its occasion and the appropriate élan of a public performance. But the second of Freneau's ambitious early poems, "The American Village," published in the same year (1772) but written sometime after Freneau's graduation in 1771, is at once less sure and more revealing of Freneau's situation as to "time" and "place" at the start of his career as a writer.

"The American Village" is modeled to some extent on Oliver Goldsmith's popular poem "The Deserted Village," but Freneau's poem is significantly different. It opens by contrasting the American community—"with fair plenty blest," isolated but cradled "in the bosom of this western land"—to the declining British town elegized by Goldsmith. The contrast is striking. Goldsmith's "Sweet Auburn" has decayed, its gardens turned to weeds, its buildings crumbled into "shapeless ruin." Its population is oppressed by harsh landlords. Its people are lured by luxury to the corrupting city or torn with grief at the prospect of emigrating to "the ravag'd landscape" of a land across the sea with its beasts of prey and "murd'rous" savages. In the earlier days of the poet's childhood, Auburn had been a *secure* hamlet with "shelter'd cot," "cultivated farm," and "decent church." Its preacher, its schoolmaster, its innkeeper and barmaid —each resident and institution formerly had its settled place and function in a stable, ordered community which Goldsmith lingers over in tender memory. At the end he

takes a public stance and undertakes a public mission. He invokes the muse of Poetry to convince villagers, despite their poverty, to stay in the land whose "native strength" is firm, to teach them "to spurn the rage of gain" or the delusions of expanding commerce and empire. The wholesome village is going if not gone, but the solution to its problems is clear. And Goldsmith does not hesitate to specify the cure and reject commercial empire, or to devote his poem to a public mission.[5]

Freneau's American alternative is conspicuously different in important respects. For one thing, instead of simply endowing the actual details of a known past with the radiance of memory, he had to invent a more complicated past as part of his American scene, to hypothesize a heroic, visionary, or mythological past for the new land. Indeed he invented two settings for his American nymphs and swains, and these fictions embody in abstract, visionary form Freneau's aspirations for the rising nation. The same fictions express an incipient fear that the new land faces an uncertain crisis, the fear that Freneau's most cherished dreams cannot be fulfilled.

One of the enchanting settings, an invented past, is the never-never-land of the lost island of Atlantis which expressed for Freneau both his fondest dreams and his most anxious apprehensions, for he knew that it did not exist. (In "The Rising Glory," Leander had scorned Eugenio's notion of the "broken isles" of Atlantis as the original home of American Indians.[6]) Atlantis, the island calm within the tumultuous seas, was "peaceful all within," void of beasts of prey, and (since no men lived there) innocent of warfare. The political rivalries and ambitions of the "patriot breast," the boisterous revelry or the crimes of civilized society were all unknown. Here the hunter might have hunted, the farmer could have tilled the soil in the agricultural pursuits which were man's true vocation, the father might have raised his family in "happy ignorance divinely blest" without anxiety about heaven or hell. Freneau's dream is a familial and agrarian paradise, with no institutions other than

the farm and the family. It is a haven dreamed but never known, for "envious time conspiring with the sea,/ Wash'd all its landscapes, and its groves away." Freneau's enchanting vision is patently a legend, its "grandeur" and "beauty" are no longer accessible. It is celebrated to enchant the mind but not to provide an actual habitation, though it remains for the imagination one legendary dimension of the American Landscape.[7]

Alongside it Freneau instead invented another past and committed himself to a somewhat more somber prospect. It too, by comparison with Goldsmith's tangible scene, is of legendary proportions, yet it is a presumably actual landscape in America, nearer at hand in the larger Landscape, which Freneau offered as an alternative both to the lost paradise of Atlantis and to the decaying British village. The poet turns from the British scene with its colonial and continental wars to the American landscape, which even with its "howling forest" and dangerous beasts, is a safe haven from the violence of European wars. And Freneau celebrates a village of self-employed farmers in a wilderness setting now subdued; the settlements are refreshingly near the sublimity of nature (the "tremendous rocks" bordering the Hudson, "Dread nature in primaeval majesty") but there are bright clearings in the woods and "groaning waggons" of produce which testify to cultivation and rich harvests. America's bounty is as generous as Eumaeus was to Ulysses when that epic hero returned home to ancient Greece. Now "rustic huts in fair confusion grow" and each swain or citizen finds "all his pleasures in the home." [8]

Yet this local idyll too is threatened—by "dread commerce," which brought even mighty Carthage and Rome to ruin and has corrupted Britain. Commerce, conceived as the friend of civilization in "The Rising Glory of America" (even in its later version), is in *this* poem a threat. America may succumb to this "decay," but if it does, the entire world will decline with it and await the final judgment, for there are no new lands, after America, to be discovered. The fate of the world hinges on

America's success in avoiding or postponing this surrender to commerce and luxury. So pressing is the issue of this fate that Freneau devotes almost two hundred lines to a legendary tale about the American past, a sentimental tale "Full of parental love, and full of fate," about two Indian parents and their infant son who encounter tragedy when they are enticed into commerce, the fur trade. The mother offers to sacrifice herself for the other two, and father and son alone are rescued when their fragile canoe sinks on the way to a British outpost in the Hudson Bay region. The Indian nations, originally generous and free and founded on "wholesome laws," have seen the "rav'nous nations" of Europe "rob them of their native soil." Each spring the Indians now descend, from their huts scattered "in wild succession" in the North, to the British outposts. They are an "industrious people," sustained but kept poor by the trade, and they are bringing their "beaver spoils," their "furry riches," to the trading post when the mother's life is lost. After elegizing the Indian family, Freneau commits himself to "heavenly contemplation" in the rural village setting—withdrawn from society, but in the august company of Milton, Shakespeare, Dryden, Spenser, Pope, and Addison.[9]

What is significant about "The American Village," despite its patent immaturity as poetry, its many derivations from English verse, and its conventionality, is that while it begins by celebrating an actual American scene as against the decay of British village life, it soon changes its stance. It looks for a refuge in the past without actually finding one and becomes uncertain in its orientation. The poet shifts his attention first to an inaccessible paradise in the past (the lost Atlantis) and then shifts again to a once enviable Indian past which has succumbed to the very danger which Freneau (like Goldsmith) warns against, the encroachment of commerce. The Indian tale is the more significant for the fact that Freneau's father had been in commercial trade and Freneau himself was to seek his sustenance time and again

in commerce as a seagoing ship captain. Freneau's elegy to the Indian family by no means sets the threat of commerce safely behind; it does not successfully purge the American Landscape of commerce's presumed evils. The Indians have succumbed and commerce is securely established.

Furthermore, Goldsmith's clear injunction to Britishers to remain in the village and resist the lure of trade is nowhere matched by comparably decisive instructions in Freneau's poem. Freneau's tribute to the Indians is resigned in tone. Resistance to commerce seems futile—either because commerce is too firmly entrenched or because its threat is after all not dangerous enough to justify its outright repudiation. And the rural scene of his closing lines is a withdrawn refuge for the poet, a secluded retreat from his society's problems rather than a challenge to them. In "The American Village" Freneau celebrates a tenuous accord with his environment, for the threat of commerce is softened and pacified rather than subdued or eliminated by the elegy to the Indian family. The nostalgia for the nonexistent lost Atlantis and the celebration of the Indians' past do not suggest an outright, unqualified identification with the American Landscape but a full engagement only with its most legendary and remote enchantments. This is combined with the search for a *modus vivendi* or working arrangement with the larger Landscape, and even the search for an Arcadian retreat within it. To seek a pastoral refuge for the imagination was a commonplace motive in eighteenth-century literature. For the American Freneau, it must be found by withdrawing from the Landscape's foreground into some agrarian simulacrum of the lost Atlantis, safely secluded in the rural American background or enchantingly tempting on the far horizon in the sea.

In the decades following 1772 the "Rising Glory" of the new nation made stronger and more demanding appeals to Freneau's imagination, but so did the exotic charms of those fragments of the lost Atlantis celebrated in "The American Village," whose fragments were the

West Indies where Freneau actually traveled during part of the Revolution. And however difficult it remained for Freneau to define the place of commerce in the American scene, its connection with his literary career became more intimate once he had decided against the ministry as a profession and, after trying his hand at literary journalism, had entered commerce himself as an agent and sea captain. Freneau's commercial career often enabled him to write poetry, by giving him the time and bringing him within reach of provocative subjects and scenes. But commercial values challenged his imagination, seeming at times to have a place in the Rising Glory, at other times to be dangerously at odds with the American Landscape. Freneau's feelings toward commerce were contradictory, with the result that he helped establish two divergent attitudes which have remained important in American culture. One envisions the reconciliation of commerce with an agrarian society and with the imagination. The other repudiates commerce and pits the imagination against it.

The American Landscape celebrated in "The American Village" still defined Freneau's aspirations, but his anxious fears as well, as he sought to find and shape the environment for his literary vocation in New York, Philadelphia, and Santa Cruz and then finally in 1794 settled as a farmer and country printer at Mount Pleasant in Monmouth County, New Jersey.

"The American Village," which holds in suspension rather than fully resolving Freneau's feelings and intentions early in his career, was written during the months after graduating from college when Freneau tried theological study and school teaching but swiftly abandoned such plans, with undisguised distaste for the schoolteaching. While there are regrettably gaps in Freneau's biography during the 1770's which not even Professor Lewis Leary's endeavors have been able to fill, there is no doubt that his early career was strained by the conflicting pressures of the world around him and by unresolved ambi-

tions within himself, as he turned to various outlets for his talents—outlets which at times promised a firm involvement with the issues of his day but at other times threatened clear disengagement from them. Freneau's career in teaching was short. He taught first, and for only 13 days, in Flatbush, Long Island, where (as he wrote James Madison) some gentlemanly "bullies," "merchants," and "Scoundrels" paid him little to teach a "brutish, brainless crew" of their children. He missed the intellectual companionship of college when he taught at Brackenridge's school in Maryland, which he found little more to his liking.[10]

During the two years after 1772 he studied theology for a protracted time before abandoning it; and unconfirmed reports suggest that he studied law, all the while writing poetry of a variety of kinds. When he wrote another of his most ambitious early poems, "The Pictures of Columbus," in 1774, he found in the heroism of Columbus a drama, mixing courageous commitment with pathetic disenchantment, that was later to fascinate the poets Whitman and Hart Crane. Freneau's Columbus cries out against the murder of innocent native islanders in the "broken isles" he discovers, and against the lust for gold which seems the only "fruit of my discovery." But even when he returns to Spain in disgrace, knowing that his "new-found world" is not "honour'd with my name," his "memory" and "fancy" summon up the vision which rewards his effort: a future empire rising

> where lonely forests grew,
> Where Freedom shall her generous plans pursue.[11]

Within two years Freneau was to leave the colonies for a two-year sojourn in the West Indies. Before then, however, he had experienced both the excitement of patriotic journalism and the penalties incurred for stepping into the political arena. For he turned his pen against the British and the Tory colonials during the opening months of what came to be the struggle for independence.

In one poem he hailed the erection of the Liberty Pole in New York and he recalled proudly (decades later in Trenton's *True American*) that the poem had been read aloud at the dedication and distributed in broadside form. In others he triumphed (in advance and from a safe distance) over the Massachusetts governor, General Gage, who was commanding the British during the seige of Boston. Freneau offered in "General Gage's Soliloquy" and "General Gage's Confession" a scathing portrait of an opportunist and coward who blames his superiors, betrays his cohorts and concedes the rightness of the colonists' cause. Though tainted by papist beliefs he scorns even the "holy whining" of the priest he confesses to, and he accepts his fate finally in the stance of Pontius Pilate.[12]

Freneau still hoped for the return of peace under Britain's rule, and he may have underestimated the violence of the crisis, but his invective had bite. Moreover his celebration of the colonial cause in "American Liberty" is impassioned. It is an invitation to the oppressed to seek a haven in America where

> Commerce extends as far as waves can roll,
> And freedom, God-like freedom, crowns the whole.

It is also a rallying cry for the American soldier-farmers whose devotion to liberty is being tested in "seas of blood," confident with Freneau that

> The time shall come when strangers rule no more,
> Nor cruel mandates vex from Britain's shore;
> When Commerce shall extend her short'ned wing,
> And her free freights from every climate bring;
> When mighty towns shall flourish free and great,
> Vast their dominion, opulent their state. . . .
> Such is the life our foes with envy see,
> Such is the godlike glory to be free.[13]

Yet in the same poem, before its closing call to battle and its hymn to both agriculture and commerce in the rising commercial empire, Freneau speaks of longing to

retire to the "oblivion" of "some lone island beyond the southern pole" where he might "live at least with liberty." "Honour" alone delays him and "bids me stay." [14] In the space of a few months he had left the country under circumstances that remain obscure. He had been attacked for both the quality of his journalistic verse and his scurrilous abuse of the Tories; the charge hit home. Moreover the increasing violence of the war was unsettling. Quite suddenly, after being asked to visit in Santa Cruz (now Saint Croix in the Virgin Islands), Freneau shipped out, either as passenger or as agent for a commercial shipper in New York City. He first answered the Tories' charge of abuse in "Mac Swiggen, A Satire," declaring with heavy irony that he would delay a departure he dreamed of long enough to strike back, yet insisting that

> Long have I sat on this disast'rous shore,
> And, sighing, sought to gain a passage o'er
> To Europes' towns, where, as our travellers say,
> Poets may flourish, or perhaps they may . . . .

He concludes that he will leave the scene to despised Mac Swiggen:

> In distant isles some happier scene I'll choose,
> And court in softer shades the unwilling Muse . . .
> Safe from the miscreants that my peace molest,
> Miscreants, with dullness and with rage oppress.[15]

The years 1776 to 1778 were the years when Freneau began to learn the skills that eventually qualified him as a ship's master in the island and coastal trade. At the same time, as a resident in Santa Cruz and a visitor in Britain's Bermuda, he first saw the exotic tropics which were to stimulate his imagination just as two centuries later they were to entice another American poet, the late Wallace Stevens. The quatrains of "The Beauties of Santa Cruz" invite a shepherd to leave behind the

"glooms" and "barren prospect" of the North, to brave the death-like hazards of the sea, and to enjoy the "Sweet verdant isle" with the plenteous fruits and "exotic blossoms" of a rediscovered Eden. Here the poet can tune his song to the "tearful stream" which commemorates Indian lovers long since fled. Here in a temporary refuge he can enjoy the all but unspoiled beauties of creation, while pleading with plantation owners to free their slaves and cursing the greed for gold which sustains the slave trade and drives men to endure the "briny flood" in the service of commerce.[16]

For Freneau, however, such an idyll was not an entirely easy indulgence. There are lines which invoke the dangerous Lotus Eaters and Ulysses to warn the poet and his friend against the temptation of sugar cane's apotheosis, rum. The beauties of the island are rather surveyed and catalogued than enjoyed, and the poem (as if the poet were addressing himself as well as his shepherd friend) invites and prepares for the exotic delights rather than celebrating their attainment. The poem indeed (like any poem suspended midway between conventionality and genuine discovery) adopts several stances rather than fully embodying any one or forging them into a sure resolution. Some lines blandly concede the rule of tyrannical monarchy while welcoming "Nature's charms in varied beauty" from the soft ease of a retreat. But when Freneau at the end returns to "sing with rapture" of Santa Cruz, he must in the same quatrains concede that his friend, "persuaded by no lay of mine," may choose the turmoil of the northern scene instead and Freneau bids him stay there and "Repell the tyrant who thy peace invades. . . ." [17]

One of Freneau's more famous poems, however, the macabre and Poe-like fantasy about death entitled "The House of Night," reveals that the question of his responsibilities during the war was a matter of genuine and compelling concern to him. The poem is of uncertain date. First published in 1779, it may have been written in 1775 before the poet's departure for Santa Cruz or it

may have been written after his arrival there. In any case, the compulsive fantasies projected in the poem have to do not only with the figure of Death and the apprehensions about death which often gripped Freneau but also with political connotations implicit in that figure and the violence breaking out in the colonies. And the fantasies have more to do with Freneau's eventual *return* to join in the colonial cause than with anticipation of his expatriation just before leaving for the Indies.[18] In "The House of Night" the poet triumphs over Death not by evading death but by confronting him while under orders to do his bidding. And while the poem dramatizes Freneau's reluctance to join outright in the violence of the war against King George, it also dramatizes his feelings of guilt for dissociating himself from the colonial struggle, and provides the grounds for the commitment he made in 1778 when he suddenly returned to America and Monmouth County.

Despite the trumped-up Gothic terrors of the poem's machinery and setting, the central drama is genuine: Death, when the poet encounters him, is irrevocably dying; by the end of the poem, Death's " *'sovereign sway'* " has been triumphed over and the Poet, without terror, can accept the prospect of death whether "At four score years, or now at twenty-three." During his dying hours, Death is attended by a grief-stricken young man, Cleon, a youth who, because his bride was cruelly stolen by Death, is more familiar with Death than the Poet himself, but who nevertheless administers medicines to relieve Death's final agonies. Cleon prevails upon the Poet, in the name of Christian compassion, to perform his task for a while, and Death subsequently enjoins the Poet to carve his epitaph on the tomb destined for him in a nearby graveyard. Both Cleon's hatred for Death and his strange compassion are forcefully presented, and the Poet is compelled for the while to share them. Among the horrifying crimes charged against Death is the raising of a " 'bloody army' " from the east; " 'Britannia's tyrant' " is sending " 'myriads' " of troops who will never return, and

even Death recoils from " 'ravage' " so appalling, leaving the task to a " 'deputy' " (identified in 1786 as King George). And while the speaker dissociates himself from the conflict raging in the Hudson River Valley, he joins his " 'groans' " to those of the men suffering there. When finally the Poet locates the tomb where he is to carve the epitaph, it dissolves in air—but not before he has witnessed the burial of Death.[19]

In 1786 Freneau added stanzas which underscore the political significance of the poem. The Poet is informed that Death's tomb had been built by sinners who had enjoyed the protection of "cruel and prophane" laws and had been punished for refusing humane assistance to the unprotected, the impoverished, the "naked stranger," and the "starving guest"—lines clearly intended to present compelling humanitarian grounds for Freneau's commitment in 1778 to the cause of independence.[20] Even in the earlier version, however, the poem does not present a tortured decision to leave the colonies, anticipating Freneau's departure before the fact. Instead it presents a disturbed reconsideration of his expatriation. What the poem's fantasy anticipates and prepares for is a future confrontation of the violence it fears and the tyranny, the "sovereign sway," it imagines triumphing over. The rituals of compassion and obedience to the dying sovereign which Cleon induces the Poet to share in performing do not purge the hatred he feels or eliminate the denunciation of Death which he delivers; instead they strangely prepare for them, *justify* the hatred and the repudiation, make them tolerable and indeed right.

In this way the poem does more than illuminate Freneau's willingness to postpone his active alliance with the American cause and his reasons for indulging his imagination's appetite for the exotic at the cost of the political principles he had endorsed since college days. It also reveals more pointedly the intensity of feeling, the fierceness heightened by mortal anxiety, which accompanied his imagination's linking of a monarchical tyranny with no less ominous an enemy than Death.

Aroused apparently by news of American reverses in the middle colonies, the poet suddenly returned to Monmouth County in the summer of 1778 and within a week had enlisted in the New Jersey Militia. For the next two years he served as coastal patrol in the infantry or as sea captain smuggling supplies and arms to troops and shore settlements.

Freneau's poems written to encourage enlistment or to bolster morale were triumphantly confident. The fervor of his commitment reached a new pitch of intensity toward the end of the war in 1780 when, after shipping out again for Santa Cruz, he was captured by an enemy frigate and imprisoned, first in the prison ship *Scorpion* and then in the hospital ship *Hunter*. Freneau's rage at the appalling conditions aboard both ships was compounded by his anger over being treated at first as an ordinary seaman. His bitterness was intensified by his mistaken notion that the gruesome horrors of the *Scorpion* were worse than those aboard ordinary British prison ships elsewhere and were contrived especially for rebellious colonists.[21] During his convalescence at Mount Pleasant he wrote "The British Prison-Ship," which sounded the cry for vengeance against the hated British and called on America to "glut revenge on this detested foe." [22] So vehement a sense of outrage could he bring to the patriotism he had voiced in "America Independent" just after returning to New Jersey in 1778. Then, exclaiming "How changed I find those scenes that pleased before," he damned the "murdering Tory" and "George, the Nero of our times," declared that *"Kings are the choicest curse that man e'er knew,"* called on Americans to "revenge your country's wrongs," and invoked the Rising Glory of the new empire that would justify their effort:

> Here yet shall heaven the joys of peace bestow
> While through our soil the streams of plenty flow,
> And o'er the main we spread the trading sail,
> Wafting the produce of the rural vale.[23]

What gives particular (and also representative) significance to Freneau's fervor for the American Revolution is that it was a willed commitment to a vision not yet achieved and not ever, in Freneau's imagination, thoroughly blueprinted or worked out. His vision of the Rising Glory had little ideational or ideological content. Instead it channeled strong emotion and will into hatred of the partisans of monarchy on the one hand, and into the images and tokens of milliennial and nationalistic aspiration on the other. The happy union of wholesome commerce and agrarian affluence which the poet celebrated in "America Independent" was a hoped-for reconciliation, not a certain achievement. He had questioned the validity of commerce in "The American Village," and in "Pictures of Columbus," even while clinging to the dream. His engagement with the political and social aspirations of the new nation was strong, and the emergent nation offered the artist an opportunity for active service as a writer in everyday journalism and the chance on rarer occasions to define and celebrate at higher levels of performance the goals of the new society. These were opportunities which Freneau welcomed during the next twenty years as editor of *The Freeman's Journal* in Philadelphia from 1781 to 1784, as a regular contributor to the *Daily Advertiser* in New York from 1790 to 1791, and then, from 1791 to 1793, as editor of *The National Gazette,* the Philadelphia newspaper which Freneau edited at Thomas Jefferson's request and devoted to the cause of Jeffersonian Republicanism against Hamiltonian Federalism.

Yet the burden of so demanding a mission for the artist, the confinement of so austere and public a role for the imagination, the discrepancy between such aspiring national ideals and the actualities of the existing American Village, and the frustrations encountered in the literary and political warfare of the 1780's and 1790's intensified at times Freneau's longing for escape.

Indeed, from 1784 to 1790 Freneau went back to sea as supercargo (officer in charge of the ship's commercial

transactions) and master in the coastal and Caribbean waters, still writing and submitting poetry to the journals, but dissatisfied with professional literary wrangling and with the occasional poetry which his audience seemed to prefer. The very decade during which his first collections were appearing in book form—*The Poems of Philip Freneau* in 1786 and *The Miscellaneous Works of Mr. Philip Freneau* in 1788—was a period when Freneau felt intensely the appeal of the wider horizons of the American Landscape and the unattainable Lost Atlantis in the Indies. In new poems he expressed a sympathy for the Indian whose paradise had been despoiled, a sense of the futility of human effort, the fleeting transience of life, and the drabness of the actual American Village, which at other times could enchant him. The result is that Freneau's writings do not always celebrate the glories of the opportunities for the imagination in American culture. His works also insist on the harsh limitations of the American environment. When the poet was not deliberately exalting the new nation or trying to mold institutions favorable to the imagination, he was consciously seeking alternatives to the national mission itself, searching the local setting for somber scenes which challenged the more sanguine hopes for the new society. He looked in the natural landscape for beauties which lay beyond and were threatened by the busy routines of commercial democracy and the turbulence of the new nation's institutional life. Two perspectives remain clearly established in American culture long after 1776. The one projects a harmony between society and nature, the other posits their antagonism; the one prophesies a reconciliation of commerce with agrarian pursuits, the other insists on the conflict between them; the one celebrates the grandeur of the Rising Glory, the other commemorates the legendary Landscape alone, prizing the exotic on its far horizons, or conceding the primacy of drab American villages. These perspectives are sharply focused without ever being fully reconciled in Freneau's writings after 1778. They illuminate all the more fully,

however, the conditions bearing on the arts in Freneau's America and his attempt to shape a cultural environment for his own imagination.

Among Freneau's most admired poems are some which sound "the slender tones of his lyric moods" (as Paul Elmer More phrased it[24]) in retreat from the world of literary combat he tired of in 1784 (the arena where the "scribbling tribe," hoping to "mend the world" and drawing their bills of credit on Olympian "banks above," face defeat at the hands of the mere "country 'squire" and the scorn of proud critics possessing mere "mercantile skill." [25]). In "The Departure," written at sea en route to the Indies in 1785, Freneau longs for the return of the "golden age" and, though not expecting actually to find it and regarding the voyage as a premonition of the final journey through death, he musters "fortitude for the voyage," puts the "Hudson's cold, congealing streams" behind, and makes his way to Caribbean realms for a new start

> Where other suns prompt other dreams,
> And shades, less willing to decay,
> Beget new raptures in the heart, . . .[26]

The refuge and inspiration did not always lie across the sea. Like his eighteenth-century contemporaries, Freneau sought out the "spirit of the place" in sanctuaries harbored in the native landscape. In the simple honeysuckle of his familiar region he discerned the likeness of the "flowers that did in Eden bloom," and he made from his discovery of its fragile beauties and inescapable decay an image of the imagination's transient moments of fulfillment which are threatened by the "vulgar eye," "roving foot," and "busy hand" of villagers and city dwellers.[27] Tenderness and a touch of wit combine in "The Indian Burying Ground" to commemorate the "fancies of a ruder race," the "shadows and delusions" still visible in the artifacts and upright sitting posture of buried Indians. To unimaginative strangers who

might desecrate the scene or fail to appreciate the "barbarous form" Freneau points out the beauty of the fancied figures, summons up the image of a hunter still in pursuit of the deer, and celebrates their life of action —the "Activity that knows no rest," which though "life is spent" is still imaged in the art of the burying ground.[28]

Far less successful as poetry are Freneau's attempts to render the vistas of the natural setting, though they also represent his effort to confront his actual environment and make it amenable to the imagination. The hills, "hazy summits," and "rude, resounding shore" of Neversink, though Freneau declares that he adores them as a "Half Druid" and takes his stand there on retiring to Monmouth County from the sea, are too easily exchangeable with comparable passages describing vistas in other states.[29] When the poet turned to a survey of the Atlantic States in 1790 (in a distinctly inferior series entitled "The Rising Empire" which he published in his collections but never finished), the country's "fertile, flowery breast," the happy combination of "rural reign" and the "enterprizing soul" of commerce, are frequently marred. They are spoiled by avaricious strife or by the "impoverished fields" and the unscrupulous "sharper" of Connecticut, the pathetic but sullen gracelessness of isolated Maryland plantations, and the slothful "boors" of the rural areas, the greedy Scots-Irish traders, and the languid "Mercantile towns" of Virginia.[30]

Indeed the more closely Freneau examined the actual agrarian landscape and the American Village which he had celebrated on the threshold of his career, the more reduced in scale and the less attractive it became, and the less distinctly agrarian. His imagination was often gripped by the signs of decay in the rural scene itself— by the "Deserted Farm House" for instance (whose pathetic ruins moved him as in another age comparable ruins would move Robert Frost), or by the "mingled ruins" of a country inn abandoned to "unrelenting silence" and the utter decadence which his ship passed

near on an island off the Southern coast.[31] The Bergen Planter is noble in his unassuming simplicity, independence, and moderate prosperity, but Freneau's sentimental tribute to him in 1790 is comparatively somber, and the "dejected" community examined the next year in "Log-Town Tavern" (first attributed to New Jersey, later to North Carolina) is composed of "degraded minds"; the shepherds in this rural "town of logs" are litigious thieves, and the travelers invoke a debased muse:

> With scraps of songs and smutty words
> Each lodger here adorns the walls:
> The wanton muse no pencil gives,
> A coal her mean idea scrawls.[32]

In these genre pieces, the Landscape and the Village have shrunk in scale or have been spoiled and dirtied, if not ravaged, and they give sharper point to the fears which run also through Freneau's prose that utilitarian and commercial preoccupations are a threat to the fine arts in America. They give a sober dimension to the catastrophe of the bankrupt merchant which Freneau treated comically in 1792 in "The Village Merchant" (a poem he claimed to have written as early as 1768), sketching the failure of a man who made the mistake of scorning the hardships of rural life while disdaining the city too, and tried to establish a commercial shop in the smokehouse of his family's farm. They give a more somber context also to the "Country Printer," published in 1791-1792 and issued jointly with "The Village Merchant" in 1794. This poem portrays an aging newspaperman-author in a country town whose drab fortune has never matched the grander hopes of its founders. For the man who "to these desarts brought his favorite art," the "patriot of his town," Freneau asks due respect and calls upon his country to make room for him. Freneau calls upon America to devote still the nation's "pen and press" to "freedom's sacred cause." The author-printer

in his bare village setting was virtually a portrait of Freneau himself, after he had left the national capital and established his press at Mount Pleasant near Middletown Point, Monmouth County, New Jersey.[33]

Freneau's wishful tributes in the 1780's to tropical settings, his elegiac evocations of the hidden recesses of nature and the Indian's past, and his sober assessments of the American scene in the genre poems of the 1780's and early 1790's define a mounting pressure of imminent disenchantment which bore consistently on his imagination, though of course his productions were subject also to the variety of fashions in current tastes and to mere fluctuations in mood and feeling. It was against that pressure of disenchantment that he maintained his willed commitment to the official dream of the new nation in the same decades, exaggerating (in the expediency of memory) the speed and certainty with which he had joined the provincial cause and revising his poems often in the light of later events and professions. Consequently his published collections celebrated the dream, the Rising Glory, even during years when Freneau was less sanguine about the progress toward its fulfillment and when his writings in prose and verse often pointed with varying degrees of sharpness to the limitations of the writer's opportunities in the new society.

Some of Freneau's "revolutionary poetry" is the savage invective of propaganda, delivered against such villainous enemies as General Cornwallis and King George (the latter a devilish Dagon whom Freneau would have liked to see drawn and quartered[34]) or against his Federalist enemies when editing *The National Gazette*. Some of the poems are stiffly ceremonial, designed, for instance, to welcome George Washington, one more "weary swain," to Philadelphia on the way to his Virginia home at the end of the war.[35] Still others are rhetorical exhortations aimed at policy makers or at arousing public sympathy for the French Revolution and channeling the revolutionary impulse into support of the Jeffersonian party.

Some, however, inspired by the prospect of peace at the end of the war, celebrate again the new land, its agriculture and commerce thriving in harmony, and the opportunities for the arts which it promises to afford. In "Prologue to a Theatrical Entertainment in Philadelphia," in 1782, Freneau welcomed Washington and other dignitaries to the "painted scene" and "bold theatric show" which for years had been overshadowed by "tragedies of real woe," and voices the plea that

> While arts of peace your kind protection share,
> O let the Muses claim an equal care.

He prophesied that

> Even here where Freedom lately sat distrest,
> See, a new Athens rising in the West! [36]

His poem welcoming the end of the war in 1784, "The Happy Prospect," finds hope enough to brighten even the darkening path toward decay and death as the rural "swains" return to "till the grateful soil," European immigrants seek again the American shores, "commerce from all climates brings the products of each land," and there rise on "Freedom's soil" the "Fabrics plann'd" of the new society.[37] In May of 1784, Philadelphia staged, to mark the advent of peace, a triumphal spectacle ornamented by paintings of Charles Willson Peale, and Freneau's "Lines Intended for Mr. Peale's Exhibitions" celebrated the dream that for him would brighten history

> 'Till Nature blots the scene,
> Chaos resumes her reign,
> And heaven with pleasure views its works no more.

The pageant rises "with more than Roman state" as the leaders of France and America find their exalted places. One scene commemorates the rural American "peasant" who left the "tufted forests" for the hazards of battle; another reveals a victorious Washington who

Neglects his spoils
For rural toils
And crowns his plough with laurel wreaths . . .

As peace returns, "Commerce repairs the wastes of war" and a new tree of life stands revealed:

Of science proud, the source of sway,
Lo! emblematic figures shine;
The arts their kindred forms display,
Manners to soften and refine:
A stately tree to heaven its summit sends
And cluster'd fruit from thirteen boughs depends.[38]

Despite the imminence of death and decay, and the obstacles to poetic effort in the new society, the Rising Glory solemnized in Philadelphia's pageant was the dream which Freneau chose to govern his imagination. He never ceased to long for occasions like that in 1784 when his art could have an acknowledged role in celebrating it.

In 1790 Freneau retired from the sea and shortly after married Eleanor Forman of Middletown Point. The next year they moved with their first daughter from New York to Monmouth, and after Freneau's service on *The National Gazette* in Philadelphia they settled permanently in the family house at Mount Pleasant, where three more daughters subsequently were born to them. Before leaving New York Freneau had publicly announced plans for a *Monmouth Gazette* which never materialized, and that failure proved to be a forecast of Freneau's later years. Equipped with a facile pen and a printing press, he undertook to establish revolutionary republicanism in his local region and to make a place for literature in the villages of his native landscape. But misfortune dogged his heels. He had no real taste for farming and was not successful at it; on numerous occasions after 1799 he mortgaged or sold off parcels of land. Between 1802

and 1804, helped by his brother, Captain Freneau shipped out again for Richmond, Charleston, and Madeira, but his profits were small. In one somber poem appearing in 1821 in the Trenton *True American,* he repeated warnings issued decades earlier in "Advice to Authors" to "graft your authorship upon some other calling, or support drooping genius by the assistance of some mechanical employment . . . ," but he added now the caustic reminder that even hated kings formerly patronized poetry whereas poets go begging in a democracy.[39] When he was past seventy he worked on public roads to pay his taxes and applied for a veteran's pension in 1832 just before his death. He died one December evening when, leaving the village tavern, as some believe, he set out on the two-mile walk to his home and lost his way in a snowstorm. The Duyckinck brothers cited the *Monmouth Inquirer's* report that he was found dead "in a bog meadow" the next morning.[40]

During these later years Freneau had continued to write and to design projects for promoting the literary and intellectual life, but his best writing had been produced before he settled permanently at Mount Pleasant and most of his new poetry was trivial. The New Brunswick *Freedonian* and the Trenton *True American* were among the journals that published his verse. The latter printed his prose "Recollections of Past Times and Events" in four installments in 1822. The persecution of the editor John Daly Burk under the Alien and Sedition Acts called forth lines as bitter in tone and helpless in prospect as any Freneau ever wrote, envying Burk his flight to the Southwest "Where Mississippi flows afar" and contrasting to Burk's his own fate, left behind "to teaze with rhymes/The worst of men in worst of times." [41] Yet commemorative poems to Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Thomas Paine expressed Freneau's tribute to the American experiment in both its most official and its most radical exemplars. And the War of 1812 and the career of Napoleon in Europe called forth ballads commemorating brave deeds or verses warning

against the still present threat of monarchy and tyranny.

Much of Freneau's literary effort was devoted to revising or recasting earlier work. He revised his poems and arranged them for new editions in 1795, 1809, and 1815, journeying to New York to supervise the third project even though, as he wrote James Madison, he felt "vexed" to be leaving the "solitude and the wild scenes of nature in New Jersey" for the "Town" (New York City) which, happily, wanted to reprint his works.[42] In some of his best and most popular productions, gathered as a volume in 1799, Freneau revived the simple artisan, Robert Slender, whom he had created earlier in the 1780's. He now perfected Slender's colloquial style, added the dignified initials O.S.M. after Slender's name, (explaining that the letters stood for "One of the Swinish Multitude") to give barbed point to Slender's canny simplicity. Freneau and the Jeffersonians put him to deft use against the Federalists in Pennsylvania.[43]

These letters had originally appeared in the *Aurora* in Philadelphia, and Freneau's last major effort as an editor had taken him to the other nearby metropolis, New York, in 1797. There for a year he edited and wrote regularly for *The Time-Piece and Literary Companion,* devoted, as its "Proposals" announced, to literary entertainment and the encouragement of literary talent in the new nation and particularly in "the flourishing capital of New York."[44] In its pages he warned against the dominance in public life of moneyed classes, declared his allegiance instead to the middle and lower classes, and voiced once more his agrarian philosophy. His hope that commerce and agriculture could be reconciled was based on the feeble theoretical distinction between internal and external commerce; as he wrote in "Commerce," internal trade remained in wholesome subordination to agriculture, while "distant traffic" supported monarchy and vanity abroad and spread corrupting luxuries through the American landscape.[45] The newspaper project, though short-lived, was inspired by the assurance Freneau voiced in the "Poetical Address" of its

opening issue and even underscored in his revision for the 1815 edition:

> In a country like this, exalted by fame,
> The trade of an author importance may claim
> Which monarchs would never permit them to find,
> Whose views are to chain and be-darken the mind.[46]

Try though he did to exalt the "trade of an author," Freneau's limited talent was waning in the 1790's. Moreover the cities of New York and Philadelphia which held out the most tempting opportunities and scattered audiences throughout the country were not able to support even fiction writers like Hugh Henry Brackenridge and Charles Brockden Brown, whose imaginative talents were more impressive than Freneau's. The first American writers to be widely popular in the nineteenth century were prose writers of greater imaginative power, Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper, whose conservatism helped win readers suspicious of Freneau's fervent republicanism.

Hopes comparable to those which led Freneau to try literary journalism again in the metropolis had led him, once he had retired to Mount Pleasant, to try to create an audience and a place for his productions in his local region. His efforts can remind us that one of his representative aims was to found a career both on the national offices and aspirations of the new society and on the closely familiar life of his local village and regional landscape. Without being sanguine about local eighteenth-century audiences in Monmouth County or Trenton, which indeed could not support a rich cultural life, Freneau persisted in his efforts. When plans for the *Monmouth Gazette* dissolved, he issued *The Monmouth Almanac* for 1794 and then *Poems Written between the Years 1768 and 1794* from his own press.

In the spring of 1795 he launched the *Jersey Chronicle,* confiding to James Madison that he would not expect the "polite taste of Philadelphia" to be matched in his

"crude and barbarous part of the country." Yet he stirred his readers with the announcement that "there never was a more interesting period than the present" and that, in view of the emancipation of "the human species," he would undertake to inform "his fellow citizens in the present history, and politics of the world." [47] Fourteen of its issues contained the prose reflections of "Tomo Cheeki, The Creek Indian in Philadelphia." The bemused observations of this simple figure on the vanities and futilities of white civilization terminated in a utopian dream of a recreated world in the future. It resembled, though with a more philosophical cast, the lost Atlantis which Freneau had elegized in "The American Village" but it seemed now, to the older country printer, even more remote from his own time and place.

Freneau's determined effort to make an environment receptive to his imagination has proved to be the characteristic ambition in a society whose traditions are yet to be made and where, as T. S. Eliot has written, if one wants tradition he must "obtain it by great labour." [48] The challenge which Freneau's ambitions presented to his own capacities was one he never could successfully meet. And the challenge which his aspirations for the arts in the new society presented to America and New Jersey remained to be voiced by other spokesmen, including Walt Whitman, until William Carlos Williams sought in the mid-twentieth century to create from the materials of urban Paterson, New Jersey, a poetic *Paterson* commensurate with his imaginative vision.

Notes

1. Evert A. and George L. Duyckinck, *Cyclopedia of American Literature,* edited by M. Laird Simons (2 vols.; Philadelphia, 1877), I, 350.

2. Fred L. Pattee (ed.), *The Poems of Philip Freneau* (3 vols.; Princeton, 1902-1907), I, 35, 29, 40.

3. Excerpts from the manuscript of "Satires against the Tories" are quoted by Lewis Leary, *That Rascal Freneau* (New Brunswick, 1941), 32-33.

4. Freneau frequently and extensively revised "The Rising Glory of America," using only those parts of the original joint production which he claimed as his own but altering the phrasing, re-assigning some parts to different speakers, and adding lines or sections after 1786 which took note of the war for independence and defined the "Rising Glory" as a distinctly American, not British, destiny. I have quoted only from the revised version (as printed in 1809) inasmuch as that version has been most often reprinted and is authentically Freneau's own verse, but I have used only those sections which appeared also in the original poem as published in 1772. The original edition included sections later omitted elegizing the preacher George Whitefield and praising New York City and Philadelphia as commercial centers and, in Philadelphia's case, as a stimulus to science and the arts. Both the version of 1772 and that of 1809 are printed in Pattee, *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* III, 49-84, and quotations above are from I, 49, 82-84, 54-55, 67, 63, 68-69, 71-72, 74, 76.

5. "The American Village," *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* III, 381; "The Deserted Village," Austin Dobson (ed.), *The Complete Poetical Works of Oliver Goldsmith* (London, 1906), 23, 24, 35, 37.

6. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* I, 56.

7. "The American Village," in *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* III, 381, 383-385.

8. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* III, 382-383, 386.

9. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* III, 386-390, 392-394.

10. Freneau's reactions are recorded in a letter to Madison which Pattee reprints in *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* I, xxi-xxiii; the quotations above are from I, xxii.

11. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* I, 117, 122.

12. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* I, 195.

13. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* I, 150-152.

14. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* I, 149.

15. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* I, 206, 211.

16. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* I, 249, 256, 259-260, 263.

17. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* I, 260-261, 267-268.

18. Professor Leary presents his reasons for preferring the earlier date and his interpretation of the poem in *That Rascal*

Freneau, 67, 375-376 n.12. The poem first appeared in *The United States Magazine,* I (August, 1779), 355-362, and subsequent versions were altered and abbreviated. My quotations are from the more readily available version of 1786 given by Pattee in *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* which includes also certain stanzas omitted by Freneau from later versions.

19. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* I, 232, 221, 229-230, 216-217.

20. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* I, 236.

21. Dorothy Dondore has made this point in the course of discussing the importance of Freneau's poem in the history of prison reform. See her "Freneau's *The British Prison-Ship* and Historical Accuracy," *English Journal,* XXVIII (1939), 228-230.

22. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* II, 26, 38.

23. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* I, 279, 276, 274, 281-282.

24. *Shelburne Essays: Fifth Series* (New York, 1908), 95.

25. "Epistle to Sylvius," *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* II, 295-297.

26. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* II, 300-301, 298.

27. "The Wild Honey Suckle," *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* II, 306.

28. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* II, 369-370.

29. "Neversink," *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* III, 3-5.

30. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* III, 5, 7-10, 16, 18.

31. "Stanzas Occasioned by the Ruins of a Country Inn" and "The Bay Islet," *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* II, 110-111; III, 116-117.

32. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* III, 19-21.

33. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* III, 64.

34. "On the Fall of General Earl Cornwallis," *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* II, 100.

35. "Verses Occasioned by General Washington's Arrival in Philadelphia," *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* II, 225.

36. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* II, 108-109.

37. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* II, 242-243.

38. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* II, 246-249.

39. "Advice to Authors," in *The Prose of Philip Freneau,* edited by Philip M. Marsh (New Brunswick, 1955), 91; "The City Poet," in *The Last Poems of Philip Freneau,* edited by Lewis Leary (New Brunswick, 1946), 31-32.

40. *The Cyclopedia of American Literature,* I, 348.

41. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* III, 228.

42. The letter to Madison is quoted by Lewis Leary in *That Rascal Freneau,* 338.

43. *Letters on Various Interesting and Important Subjects,* edited by Harry Hayden Clark (New York, 1943), iv-v.

44. "Proposals for Publishing a New Paper," *Time-Piece,* March 13, 1797.

45. "Commerce," *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* III, 221.

46. *The Poems of Philip Freneau,* III, 138.

47. Freneau's letter to Madison is quoted in Leary, *That Rascal Freneau,* 254; Freneau's editorial announcement is in "To the Public," *Jersey Chronicle,* May 2, 1795.

48. "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *Selected Essays, 1917-1932* (New York, 1932), 4.

Bibliographical Note

It is still possible that additional Freneau manuscripts will be discovered, and it is likely that some anonymous pieces in the journals of the early national period will be identified as Freneau's, but the bulk of his writings is available in well edited selections, and the full body of material by and about him is already covered in extensive authoritative bibliographies listed below.

The most representative collections published by Freneau himself are *Poems Written Between the Years 1768 & 1794* (Monmouth, N. J., 1798) and *Letters on Various Interesting and Important Subjects* (Philadelphia, 1799; reprinted in facsimile, New York, 1943). The most readily available selections are Harry H. Clark (ed.), *Poems of Philip Freneau* (New York, 1929) and Philip M. Marsh (ed.), *The Prose of Philip Freneau* (New Brunswick, 1955). More complete collections of the poetry are Fred L. Pattee's *The Poems of Philip Freneau, Poet of the Revolution* (3 vols.; Princeton, 1902-1907) which has been supplemented by Lewis Leary's *The Last Poems of Philip Freneau* (New Brunswick, 1946) covering poems written after 1815.

The best and most recent full biography is Lewis Leary's definitive work, *That Rascal Freneau: A Study in Literary Failure* (New Brunswick, 1941). For the classic brief treatment of Freneau's career in its social and political context, the

reader should turn to Vernon L. Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought* (3 vols.; New York, 1927-1930), I, 368-381. The most discriminating brief treatment of his poetry remains Paul Elmer More's "Philip Freneau" in *Shelburne Essays: Fifth Series* (New York, 1908), 85-105.

The social and cultural context in which Freneau's career took form is complicated, and diverse insights into it are available in the early chapters of the following: Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, *The American Spirit* (New York, 1942); Van Wyck Brooks, *The World of Washington Irving* (New York, 1944); Russel B. Nye, *The Cultural Life of the New Nation, 1776-1830* (New York, 1960); Constance Rourke, *The Roots of American Culture and Other Essays* (New York, 1942), 3-59; and Henry N. Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), 3-12. The variety and range of interests his writings afford are suggested by the following titles which treat particular dimensions of Freneau's career: Moses C. Tyler, *The Literary History of the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (2 vols.; New York, 1897), I, 171-183; II, 246-275; as edited by Randolph G. Adams, this has been reprinted (2 vols.; New York, 1941); Samuel E. Forman, "The Political Activities of Philip Freneau," *Johns Hopkins University Studies in History and Political Science,* XX (Baltimore, 1902); Nelson F. Adkins, *The Religious and Philosophical Speculations of an American Poet* (New York, 1949); Carl Holliday, *The Wit and Humor of Colonial Days, 1607-1800* (Philadelphia, 1902), 170-198; and Ima H. Herron, *The Small Town in American Literature* (Durham, N. C., 1939), 32-36.

Lewis Leary's *That Rascal Freneau* has superseded Mary S. Austen's *Philip Freneau . . .* (New York, 1901), and his chapter on early poets of the new nation in *The Literary History of the United States,* edited by Robert E. Spiller *et al.* (3 vols.; New York, 1948), I, 162-176, is among the good brief treatments of Freneau's career. Other illuminating biographical and critical essays appear in the various editions of his work and in literary histories. In *The Poems of Philip Freneau* (listed above), Fred L. Pattee included a biography which emphasizes Freneau's poetic career (I, xiii-cxii) and a list of published poems omitted from his collection (III, 401-406). The same author's sketch in *The Dictionary of American Biography* (21 vols.; New York, 1928-1936) and Harry H. Clark's introduction to his selection, *Poems of Philip Freneau* (New York,

1929), xiii-lx, are useful. Assessments of Freneau's literary merits have ranged from Edmund Clarence Stedman's genteel disdain for his "ditties" (in *Poets of America* [Boston, 1885], 35-36) to Henry W. Wells' praise for Freneau's healthy activism as an antidote to decadence (in *The American Way of Poetry* [New York, 1943], 5-18). Victor F. Calverton, in his Marxian *The Liberation of American Literature* (New York, 1932), 196-201, treats Freneau enthusiastically as a spokesman for the petty bourgeoisie. In *The Continuity of American Poetry* (Princeton, 1961), 198-202, Roy Harvey Pearce emphasizes Freneau's "public poetry" and the limitations of his talent. Instructive essays on Freneau's literary importance are Gay Wilson Allen, *American Prosody* (New York, 1935), 1-26, and Harry H. Clark's three articles: "The Literary Influences of Philip Freneau," *Studies in Philology,* XXII (1925), 1-33; "What Made Freneau the Father of American Poetry?" *Studies in Philology,* XXVI (1929), 1-22; and "What Made Freneau the Father of American Prose?" *Transactions, Wisconsin Academy of Science, Arts and Letters,* XXV (1930), 39-50.

For Freneau's friendship with Madison and his service to Jeffersonian Republicanism as editor of the *National Gazette,* see, in addition to works by Leary and Forman listed above, the following informative pieces by James M. Marsh: "Freneau and Jefferson: The Poet-Editor Speaks for Himself . . . ," *American Literature,* VIII (1936), 180-189; "Madison's Defense of Freneau," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd ser., III (1946), 269-280; "Jefferson and Freneau," *American Scholar,* XVI (1947), 201-210; "Philip Freneau and James Madison, 1791-1793," *Proceedings of The New Jersey Historical Society,* LXV (1947), 189-194.

The first extensive bibliography of Freneau's writings was Victor H. Palsits, *A Bibliography of the Separate and Collected Works of Philip Freneau* (New York, 1903). It has been superseded by the bibliography in Leary's biography. A recent bibliographic study is Owen P. Thomas, "Philip Freneau: A Bibliography," *Proceedings of The New Jersey Historical Society,* LXXV (1957), 197-205. The most thorough selective bibliography of writings by and about Freneau is that in Volume III of the *Literary History of the United States* (3 vols.; New York, 1948), and its *Bibliography Supplement,* edited by Richard M. Ludwig (New York, 1959), which together have been reprinted as Volume II of the revised third

edition of the *Literary History of the United States* (2 vols.; New York, 1963). Current Freneau items are covered quarterly in the bibliographies of periodical literature published in *American Literature* (Durham, N. C., 1929-).

Manuscript collections are listed in Leary's biography on pages 409-411. The chief collection is the Freneau Collection of the Rutgers University Library. The manuscript of Volume II of "Father Bombo's Pilgrimage to Mecca in Arabia," which Freneau wrote jointly with Hugh Henry Brackenridge in 1770, is in the collection of the Pennsylvania Historical Society; a handwritten copy of Volume I is in the possession of Dr. and Mrs. Stanley Parks of Lexington, Kentucky.

HENRY VAN DYKE
AND
RICHARD WATSON GILDER

THE GARDEN POETS

BY NATHANIEL BURT

HENRY VAN DYKE
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THE GARDEN POETS

AVALON stood on Bayard Lane in Princeton, New Jersey, typical of the large square yellow-plaster mansions of the town. Westland was there across the street in its big open yard, another of the kind. There was Thompson Hall, now the offices of the Borough, similar despite its mansard roof. The Miller House on Mercer Street, now the Nassau Club, is still another, and the Stockton, now the Palmer house, perhaps the best example of all. Even the much older Morven, now the official residence of the governors of New Jersey, formerly home of the Stocktons and Princeton's "great house," is of the same species: ample, yellow, with white woodwork and, always, neighboring trees. The pride of Avalon was the great elm that stood before it. Though the house was originally of revolutionary vintage, in its final shape it was a house of the pre-Civil War nineteenth century: neoclassic, a bit heavy, very handsome. A semicircular, high-pillared portico with steps curving up to it sheltered the fan-lit doorway. Next to the house lay a century-old garden.

These big important yellow houses, native it would seem to this part of this state, were owned by big important people. The owner of Westland was the Jersey-

Avalon, the Home of Henry van Dyke in Princeton
Courtesy of Mrs. Robert Greiff

born Grover Cleveland, twice President of the United States. Avalon housed Henry van Dyke; and nobody in Princeton, not even Cleveland, and few in the United States were more important than Henry van Dyke.

Nowadays people who have moved to Princeton since the Second World War, or who were born after 1930 say "Henry van Dyke? Who was he?" No one who lived in Princeton or New Jersey at the time of the First War could have been in any doubt. Henry van Dyke, in the center of American Presbyterianism, was probably American Presbyterianism's most famous dominie-preacher, pastor, inspirational pamhphleteer (there was even a Henry van Dyke calendar, with sentiments for every day from the *Works.)*

He was a famous teacher. As holder of the Murray Professorship of English Literature at Princeton University, endowed especially for Henry van Dyke, he was the principal American champion of Tennyson.

His fame as a teacher, great as it was, did not begin to compare to his fame as a writer. Some sixty of his books and pamphlets were published over five decades. In every vein they were enormously, incredibly successful: ". . . his stories were among the 'best sellers' and *Music and Other Poems* was passing through numerous editions and several of his books of essays were approaching the 100,000 mark," wrote his son and biographer Tertius van Dyke. He was especially famous as a fisherman, not only in deed but in word; his *Little Rivers* and other such books remain today part of the literary canon of that pleasantly written about sport. He was a man of affairs as well as a sportsman. Democrat and liberal political supporter of his friendly enemy Woodrow Wilson, with whom he quarreled in university affairs, he was rewarded with the post of Minister to the Netherlands.

The bare facts of his career give only a faint idea of the size of his fame and position during what Van Wyck Brooks has called the "Confident Years" of American letters (though Brooks unaccountably fails to describe

van Dyke in his book so titled; yet who was more representatively confident than van Dyke?). Perhaps the most significant monument to his reputation was the Avalon edition of his collected works published in 18 large light-blue volumes by Scribner's in the 1920's. Van Dyke is surely one of the last authors to be so grandly embalmed.

A small, moustached, handsome man, charming, vital, a bit cocksure and bantam, a bit belligerent in his self-importance ("the only man who can strut sitting down" was maliciously said of him, and many found him pompous), he had much of the robin about him. A friend of the great and member of clubs and societies, he spoke wittily after dinner and played pranks at home. Fame, family esteem and friendship followed him till he died at Avalon in his eighty-first year on April 10, 1933.

He was also a poet. It was with van Dyke as a Jersey poet, not as pastor or professor, that we are concerned here. Van Dyke was just as successful, just as famous, just as popular a poet as he was a person, a preacher, a professor, or a prose writer; and perhaps even more significant. He was, along with two other friends, Thomas Bailey Aldrich and Richard Watson Gilder, probably the representative poet of the last flowering of what has been scornfully called the Genteel Period; before it was killed off by the frosts of the First World War.

This Genteel Period represents an amazing phenomenon of American literary history; not amazing because of its works, but because of its reputation. In ancient Egypt, as in modern Russia, a change of regime usually involved an attempt to wipe out the past. Statues of a former pharaoh were defaced, inscriptions chipped away; anything called Stalin, like Stalingrad, has to be renamed. A similar process has taken place in American literary history. The Genteel Period has been similarly wiped off the map of criticism and history. It is decreed no longer to exist. Until very recently, in anthologies, in textbooks, one simply skiped nimbly from the Flowering of New England, and using Emily Dickinson, Lanier and that expatriate Jerseyman Stephen Crane as stepping

stones, hops into Modern Times with Edward Arlington Robinson. It is as though, in a hall of family portraits, one generation had been ripped down and disposed of, leaving an unaccountable gap. Between 1870 and 1890 in particular, there would seem to have been almost no new poets published in the United States; and after that, none except the revolutionaries. (Even then, such conservative popular poets as the Jerseyman Joyce Kilmer and his "Trees" don't count.)

There are certainly reasons for this. The body of respectable poetry in that period represented an obvious decadence after the outburst before the Civil War. The poets of the post Civil War generation were epigoni, underbrush, dwarfed in the shadow of the earlier great men. The fact that so many of the older poets lived on and on, objects of pilgrimage in their New England houses (Emerson and Longfellow did not die till 1882, Lowell in 1891, Whittier in 1892, Holmes in 1894), and that they in turn were overshadowed by Browning (died 1889) and Tennyson (1892), seems to have overcome the younger generation. They could not get out of that shadow. By any standards their work remains imitative, pale, more facile always than forceful. Very much a second growth.

A similar phenomenon is the hush in English poetry that lasted from 1740, after Alexander Pope stopped writing, till say the 1760's, when Charles Churchill's *The Rosciad* and James Macpherson's *Fingal* appeared. A few poems, like Gray's "Elegy" and William Collins' odes stand out with their frail companions in the shades created by Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* and Robert Blair's *Grave,* the last of James Thomson, Mark Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination,* and Thomas Warton's *Pleasures of Melancholy.* It was not a period bursting with promise; its most vital verse was written by the madman Smart, its most energetic by the reactionary Johnson. But it does exist, historians of English literature do not simply ignore it. Collins and Gray, Akenside and the Wartons, Johnson and John Dyer get,

if anything, more than their due of study and praise. But then, we are safely far away from them all now. In the closer nineteenth century even Pope was not respected.

So it is with the Genteel Period. Taylor, Stedman, Stoddard, Madison Cawein, George Woodberry, Gilder, Aldrich, van Dyke, and a dozen others in the same tradition did write and publish, either in the gap itself or in the later years up to the First World War. They were not without quality; and they certainly existed. Yet it was, all of it from the aftermath of the Civil War to the prelude of the European War, a twilight zone of American poetry, a valley between two ranges of exuberance, peopled and dominated by small masters. Perhaps our own period just past, that of 1940 to 1960, may in the future come to seem very much like it.

The key figure, the progenitor and first representative of the Genteel Period and its school (if it can honestly be called a school) was a Pennsylvanian, Bayard Taylor. That he was a Pennsylvanian who worked largely in New York was significant; for what the Genteel School in fact represented was a diffusion into the barbaric American hinterland of the spores of New England "genius." New England itself became a hinterland in the process, but the standards and styles of Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Whittier, Emerson in this dispersion still dominated the country.

Taylor was in a way almost a contemporary of the New Englanders. His early popular works, his books of travels, his *Poems af the Orient,* were all published before the Civil War, and he died in 1878, long before the great old men. This contemporaneousness is however deceptive. He was a very young man when his first fame as a traveler in far countries came to him in the forties and fifties. He was born as late as 1825, and his serious poetry all dates after 1860, beginning with the *Poet's Journal* of 1862.

Taylor's poetry is correct; technically polished, metri-

cally skillful and varied, formally precise. It is conventional: high-minded sentiments are properly reproduced. It is graceful and decorative. It is, in fact, a sort of classicism smothered under the trappings of romanticism, much as the poetry of 1740 to 1760 is romanticism smothered under the trappings of classicism. It is in the best of taste. There is no blood on the page. All these things can be said of most of the period's poetry, especially that of Taylor's own circle. A group of his friends and disciples in New York—Edmund Clarence Stedman, poet, broker, and most influential critic of American poetry in his day, William Winter, the most important of American drama critics, and also a minor poet, Richard Henry Stoddard, poet and editor, and young Thomas Bailey Aldrich, editor, poet, writer of fiction—were the outstanding members of this group. Led by Taylor, occasionally joined by Taylor's best friend, the Philadelphia dramatist and clubman George Boker, the circle worked and lived in the metropolis as journalists, though none were native New Yorkers. They entertained themselves with convivial meetings and satirical readings. A record of this Genteel Bohemia survives in Bayard Taylor's book of satirical lampoons called *The Echo Club*. The name Echo Club might very well be applied to the group itself. Aldrich, youngest of the charter members and a special protégé of Taylor's, moved up to Boston as early as the sixties. There, from 1881 to 1890, as Editor of the mighty *Atlantic Monthly,* he was one of the literary powers in America. Yet, it was the rising dominance of New York and the Middle Atlantic States after 1870 in literary affairs that made these men of the Echo Club important; they dominated this dominance as critics, editors and practitioners.

Into this world of the Echo Club came first Richard Watson Gilder in the seventies, and then in the nineties, Henry van Dyke. Their earliest poetry was absolutely Echo Club poetry, Taylor-cum-Tennyson. Both newcomers continued in that faith, Gilder adding his own

tinge of graceful melancholy, van Dyke moving into the jaunty tripping rhythms of the buoyant early twentieth century.

Nor of course were they alone. There were genteel poets everywhere, Joaquin Miller from California, James Whitcomb Riley from the Midwest, Paul Hamilton Hayne from the deep and Madison Cawein from the border south. But as taste and gentility in America were still dominated by Boston, New York and Philadelphia and as the world of learning was still dominated by Harvard, Yale and Princeton, so the poetry of the Genteel Period during its most assured, yet final phase between 1890 and 1910, was dominated by Thomas Bailey Aldrich, centered in Boston as Editor of the *Atlantic,* Richard Watson Gilder, centered in New York as editor of the *Century,* and Henry van Dyke, centered in Princeton. Other poets—Riley, Harte, Hay, Field—were more popular. Other poets—Lanier, Santayana and Lodge, Lizette Reese in Baltimore—were and are more highly regarded. But no poets were then at once more popular and more esteemed, more obviously cultivated and more obviously accessible, more continually published and more positively representative of the style and emotion of their time than these three.

All friends, they lived in a fantastically small, high, tight world. They were all three friends, indeed close friends, of the three literate Presidents, Cleveland (especially van Dyke and Gilder), Theodore Roosevelt (Gilder) and Woodrow Wilson (van Dyke) , awe-inspiring at home, respected abroad. And they were conscious, above all their other accomplishments and honors, of their high calling as Poets. When institutions wanted an ode, they knew where to turn. Gilder was the Phi Beta Kappa poet at Harvard in 1890, van Dyke in 1910. Gilder buried Grant in 1885 and van Dyke buried Mark Twain in 1910. Gilder devised inscriptions for the Pan American Exposition at Buffalo in 1901, van Dyke for a sundial at Wells College. One of Aldrich's best known poems was an elegy on the death of Bayard Taylor. Gilder

memorialized Aldrich, van Dyke memorialized both Aldrich and Gilder.

A glimpse of the kind of literary world in which these men were leaders is provided by the letters of Gilder, edited by his daughter Rosamond. There were, for instance, the Gilders' famous Friday evenings, salons, "feasts of the soul." Beginning in the young Gilders' studio, a remodeled stable on East 15th Street, they continued as the Gilders grew more prosperous in the handsome house on East 8th Street where they later moved. There in a fine neoclassic parlor, romantically decorated in the style of friend Stanford White, under portraits by friend Cecelia Beaux and by Mrs. Gilder herself, Paderewski played the piano, Modjeska recited Polish and French poetry, Saint Gaudens and La Farge dreamed up visions in bronze and stained glass and campaigns against the reactionary Academy of Fine Arts. Anybody who was anybody in the intellectual or artistic world sooner or later appeared at the Gilders'.

Things were no less exciting in summer. They went first to the seashore. At secluded Marion on Buzzards Bay in Massachusetts, they had as neighbors Joseph Jefferson, "Rip van Winkle," greatest of American comedians, and the Clevelands. They were all fast friends. Everybody visited—Henry James, Charles Dana Gibson. "Well!" exclaimed a friend one summer afternoon, "You seem to have everyone here. I should not be surprised to see the Emperor of China." At that moment up lumbered the Marion stage and out stepped a distinguished Japanese, Okakura Kakuzo, in full Japanese regalia.

When the Gilders removed to beautiful Tyringham—still in Massachusetts, but up in the mountains near Lenox—visitors still came. Henry van Dyke was one. When he asked Gilder where it was and how to get there, he got the reply:

Tyringham is in the State of Nature. It is bounded on the north by fountains that never fail, great clouds of laurel, hills

of rock and the Great Bear . . . on the east by the Purple Dawn, and on the west by a hundred summer sunsets. . . . You approach it through the stirrings and sweet hopes of springtime and leave it when the trumpets of autumn echo down the bannered valley. The above answers your question in a practical way. If you want the poetry of the place you will probably get out at Lee, Massachusetts and drive to Mr. Moore's farm . . . eastward some five miles.

So poets wrote to each other.

Even when applying for a passport, poetry had its way. Gilder wrote to friend and fellow poet John Hay about the matter. Hay happened to be Secretary of State. Poets could turn up equally often as ambassadors or in the cabinet.

'I understand you have always on hand passports in verse adapted to the use of poets, so called. As I am expecting to go abroad . . . I thought I would apply for one of your poetic forms. I can . . . furnish you with a personal description . . .

Eyes—Like a tropical night
Mouth—Becoming size
Nose—Languishing
Cheek—Somewhat above medium
Legs—Like Douglas's, 'Long enough to reach the ground.'

Cleveland was the very first guest at Tyringham, and naturally the hospitality was returned. The Gilders were always in and out of the White House. So much so that when Gilder later on stayed with the Roosevelts there, he was able to write back to a friend;

Walking through the family rooms . . . with Mrs. Roosevelt, I felt and said that I might well welcome her there to that dear familiar home of mine. She took me into her room and it was our old room! Though, indeed, I have slept at various times in nearly all the bedrooms there. . . .

Notwithstanding the horror of the recent event [McKinley's assassination] I cannot but look forward to the new administration with exhilaration. One night I talked with Roosevelt for nearly five hours—the second day of his life in the White House. He rings true!

In fact, as far as Gilder knew, the first time the Roosevelts had ever been invited to dine at the White House was when Cleveland asked them there in 1894 to meet the Gilders. Or so he wrote from the White House to fellow poet George Woodberry.

In 1901 he could joke of one of his honorary degrees. "We go to be at Yale, where youths by the name of Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, R—d W—n G—r and others are to be recipients of leather medals for being nice little boys." And to Cleveland, that same year, "I wish to congratulate Princeton through you on your accession to a trusteeship there." When Wilson was inaugurated as president of Princeton, Gilder's old friends Stedman and Clemens were in the inaugural procession with him; he saw Cleveland and "Mark Twain" again at the Huttons' dinner afterward. It was Gilder who first introduced Twain and James Whitcomb Riley to the Clevelands at a White House tea in 1888.

1903: I went to a lunch today . . . at W. Reid's, Carnegie on my right, Morgan opposite etc., etc. As I got back to the house there was a commotion on the second floor, and the divine Duse was just going. She stayed a while to chat. It seems H. [Helena, Mrs. Gilder] had been translating for her a little impromptu I had written . . . about our being so much to her when she was less known—She was

"Loving and lonely
Ours, and our only."

She wrote on the page "Elle est plus seule que jamais!"

When Whitman too was lonely, he too was the Gilders' only. "You must never forget this of the Gilders," Whitman told his biographer, "that at a time when most everybody else in their set threw me down they were nobly and unhesitatingly hospitable. . . . they just asked me along in the natural way. It was beautiful—beautiful. You know at one time the church was an asylum for fugitives . . . I was such an innocent and the Gilders took me in."

That small world, where poets wrote to poets about their friends the Presidents.

Of these three dictators of America's *fin-de-siècle* literary world, Aldrich, Gilder, and van Dyke, two were Jerseymen.

Gilder was a born native. His mother's family, the Nutts, were long established in Burlington County. Gilder himself was born in his mother's birthplace, Belle Vue in Bordentown, a fine Revolutionary frame house surrounded by towering buttonwoods, and pines planted by his father. The Gilders were from Delaware via Philadelphia, where Gilder's grandfather was a builder and a man of substance, alderman, layer of cornerstones.

Gilder's father, a Methodist minister and schoolmaster, moved soon after Gilder's birth to Flushing on Long Island; but Gilder's beloved Aunt Maria continued to live in Belle Vue for many years, and Gilder always thought of it as his real home.

Gilder's father was not a very successful teacher, evidently. The Flushing Female College failed. The senior Gilder went back to preaching at Methodist churches in Connecticut. The Civil War broke out, and the Reverend Gilder entered the army as chaplain of the Fortieth New York (Mozart) Regiment, while the rest of the family took refuge in Belle Vue. In 1864 he died of smallpox in winter quarters in Virginia.

Richard himself, after seeing brief but to him memorable action as an adolescent artilleryman, had to become breadwinner for the family. Though he had studied law and had a clerkship in the Bullitt office in Philadelphia, he had to earn more than the three dollars a week that position offered him. He took a job as paymaster on the Camden and Amboy Railroad that ran along the river by Bordentown.

Before long, however, he was in journalism, there to remain for the rest of his life. To pick up spare cash, he became local correspondent for the Newark *Daily Advertiser;* then with partners started the *Newark Morning Register.* While still on the soon-to-fail *Register,* he also became editor of a magazine called *Hours at Home,* put

out by Scribner's. In 1870 this turned into *Scribner's Monthly*. Gilder moved to New York, and from then on he lived there, later as editor of the *Century*, until his death in 1909. His wife, Helena de Kay, was of an old New York family, Dutch despite the French sounding name; all his children were born and raised as New Yorkers. But Gilder himself always thought of Belle Vue and Bordentown as home, and referred to himself as a Jerseyman—"I wrote to Mr. Frelinghuysen (a fellow Jerseyman and an old friend)."

He owned Belle Vue till his death; his son inherited it, and eventually gave it to the town of Bordentown, where in 1957 it was restored and opened as an historical museum. Perhaps Gilder's most truly evocative poem is his nostalgic picture of Belle Vue called "The Old House."

Van Dyke's Jerseyism is similar and parallel, though contradictory in each detail. Gilder was born in New Jersey. Van Dyke was born in Pennsylvania. Gilder's father came from Philadelphia to marry and teach in Bordentown. Van Dyke's grandfather was born near New Brunswick, but settled and practiced medicine in Philadelphia. The van Dykes, Dutchmen of course, were descended from a Jan van Dyke, who moved to Middlesex County in the early eighteenth century, and proliferated. Local graveyards are full of van Dykes (Henry was always very punctilious about the little "v"). Six Jans or Johns served in New Jersey regiments during the Revolution. The grandson of one of these was Frederick Augustus, graduate of the College of New Jersey in 1812 and grandfather of Henry.

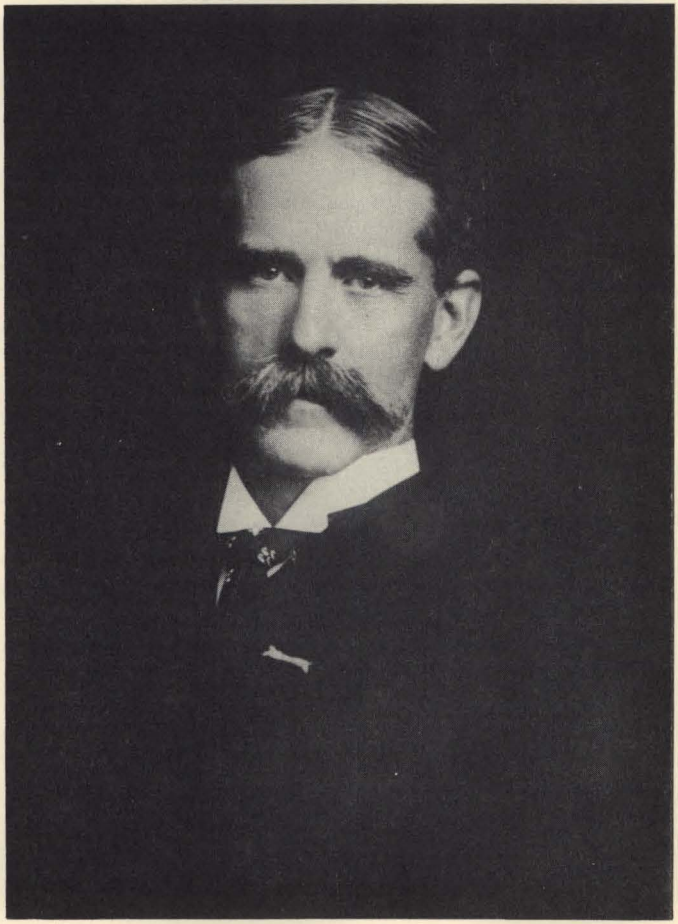
Henry Jackson van Dyke, fourth son of Frederick Augustus, also became, like Gilder's father, a clergyman. He graduated from Princeton Seminary and immediately took his new Philadelphia bride to his first call in Bridgeton, New Jersey. However, he soon returned to Germantown, where son Henry was born in 1852, and then, following the footsteps of the peripatetic Reverend Gilder, he went on to Long Island. Unlike Gilder and

his Flushing Female College, the senior Henry van Dyke was a success at the First Presbyterian Church on Remsen Street in Brooklyn. Young Henry was brought up in that cantankerous borough.

New Jersey remained the ancestral home. When it came time for young Henry to go to college, both his father and his grandfather seemed determined to get him back to the Old Sod. The robust Frederick Augustus still owned the family property in New Brunswick, and in his eighty-sixth year was able to tramp his son and grandson about the property with such vigor that they were tired out, while he remained "fresh as a lark." Though it was Frederick that was the graduate of Princeton, Henry Jackson having gone to the University of Pennsylvania, he wanted his grandson to enter Rutgers in his native New Brunswick. Henry's father however persuaded him to Princeton. The decision was fateful, and from the time the sixteen-year-old Henry entered Princeton in 1869 till his death he remained the most ardent of Princetonians and Jerseymen.

He graduated from Princeton, then still the College of New Jersey, in 1873, and from the Princeton Theological Seminary in 1877. His next years were spent as a pastor, ending up in the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York. During his ministry there from 1883 to 1899, he began to publish books and simultaneously made his reputation as preacher, reformer, student of Tennyson, writer of tales. *The Other Wise Man* (1896), which has remained his most popular story and is still in print after selling millions of copies in many languages, was first read as a Christmas sermon from the Brick Church pulpit. But in 1899 he accepted the Murray Professorship at Princeton and returned to New Jersey. He opened the new century by moving into Avalon. There he lived for the long rest of his life.

Gilder, then, was born and to some extent brought up in New Jersey, but settled and died in New York. Van Dyke was brought up in, or almost in, New York, but



Henry van Dyke
Courtesy of Princeton University Archives

settled and died in New Jersey. Gilder was from Bordentown on his mother's side, Philadelphia on his father's. Van Dyke was from New Brunswick on his father's side, and Philadelphia on his mother's. None of this would perhaps in itself make one a Jersey Poet. Stephen Crane was far more a Jerseyman by birth and upbringing; but one would have to work hard to wring out of his stark poetry any essentially Jersey qualities. Gilder and van Dyke, on the contrary, lend themselves to the process.

Despite their long city experience, they both remain garden poets. Though an occasional poem does speak of the city where they made their fame and where they lived for so long, the basic landscape is that of the bucolic parts of Burlington, Mercer, and Middlesex counties—a land of open fields, of trees, of brooks, of birds, of rich springs and falls and heavy summers and winters, not so much rural as suburban-and-small-town rural; a world seen with a sundial in the middle of it, and poetry as record of strolls through flowers and fair weathers.

Direct concrete description was little in their line. Everything tends to be idealized, including the landscape; but the very lack of passion and depth and reality speaks of suburbia—a pleasant, protected, ornamental refuge from the roaring industrialism of 1900. It is not the later New Jersey of William Carlos Williams and his Paterson. The views from Belle Vue and Avalon do not include a factory. Gilder's world stretched to include Massachusetts, the sea at Marion, the mountains at Tyringham. Van Dyke embraced all outdoors. But they both saw everything through the eye of a native of a Garden State.

This of course was the basic vision of the Genteel School as a whole. Poetry was not to deal with all of life, but with a part of it, the higher octaves only—love, nature, God, culture. As technically the key word is "finish," so emotionally the key word is "idealism." It was a world of visions rather than of reality that they

hoped to present. The fact that nowadays the finish seems flat and the idealism empty certainly militates against or understanding of the poetry. None the less, finish and idealism are perfectly valid standards.

In this garden world of the ideal, van Dyke and Gilder dwelt, two singing birds. Van Dyke has already been compared to a robin—assertive, cheerful. Gilder might be, in contrast, thought of as a wood dove or warbler or thrush, "some twilit singer" as he might have put it himself. The poetic world they tended was like a garden too. They did not, could not, think of themselves as in any way the creators of this Garden of Posey. It had already been laid out before them by the Masters, in beds labeled Patriotism, Romantic Love, Affairs of State, etc. It was their duty to keep these beds fresh and to plant in them their own particular brand of tulip. Innovation merely required them to produce such new varieties; but not new flowers, much less new beds or new gardens.

The titles of the divisions in Henry van Dyke's collected *Poems* of 1911 give a fair idea of what was to be looked for in these poetic flowerbeds. "Songs Out of Doors" (nature), "Stories in Verse" (narrative moralities), "Pro Patria" (flags and heroes), "In Praise of Poets" (poems about poems), "Music" (and the arts), "Lyrics of Labour and Romance" (striving and love, love, love), "Songs of Hearth and Altar" (home and religion), "Inscriptions, Greetings, Epigrams" (exactly that). State poems—odes on several occasions, elegies for friends and the great, impromptu verses on birthdays, poems at club reunions—all these were represented too. The really metaphysical or personal lyric was comparatively rare, except for love poems (addressed to the wife). It was poetry much more in the public than the private eye.

Not originality and power, but charm and grace were sought, flowing felicity, not the startling or salty. Whether the poetry was critical and pessimist (Gilder) or affirmative and smiling (van Dyke), it always took for granted basic certainties. The garden was safely walled

in by the Christian Religion (Protestant), the American Constitution, and Good Breeding.

Above all, the subject matter was very important. This was never poetry for poets, never art for art's sake. It was poetry for the cultivated person of literary tastes, but not the professionally or professorially literary. Whereas the connoisseur may read for style, the amateur reads, and always has read and always will read, for content. Nature, patriotism, heroes, romance and love, love, love—this was the content that poetry readers then expected to find in their poetry, and in Gilder and van Dyke this is what they found.

Where van Dyke tended to be glad about it all, Gilder tended to be sad. Van Dyke liked to go a-fishing, Gilder to moon about in the dusk.

> When tulips bloom in Union Square
> And timid breaths of vernal air
> Go wandering down the dusty town,
> Like children lost in Vanity Fair . . .
> I'm only wishing to go a-fishing;
> For this the month of May was made.
>
> I guess the pussy-willows now
> Are creeping out on every bough
> Along the brook; and robins look
> For early worms behind the plough.*

That's the kind of thing city dwellers wanted to know about spring—spring, obviously, in rural New Jersey.

> This is the carol the Robin throws
> Over the edge of the valley:
> Listen how boldly it flows
> Sally on sally:
> *Tirra-lirra,*
> *Early morn,*
> *New born!*

* "When Tulips Bloom," *The Poems of Henry van Dyke* (New York, 1911), 3.

Day is near,
Clear, clear.
Down the river
All a-quiver,
*Fish are breaking . . .**

. . . in nearby Stony Brook and the Millstone River, of course. Birds of all sorts congregated in the elms of Avalon:

When May bedecks the naked trees
With tassels and embroideries,
And many blue-eyed violets beam
Along the edges of the stream,
I hear a voice that seems to say,
Now hear at hand, now far away,
"Witchery-witchery-witchery." †

A Maryland yellow-throat. As for the Hermit Thrush:

O wonderful! How liquid clear
The molten gold of that ethereal tone,
floating and falling through the wood alone. . . . ‡

Birds of all sorts, in fact, were a specialty of Henry van Dyke's, and he characterized also the bluebird, the brown thrush, the whip-poor-will, the song-sparrow, the ruby-crowned kinglet, and the veery.

Lyrics about birds were just one room in the mansion. More characteristic of van Dyke's better vein were not so much his lyrics as his longer poems. Two of his odes in particular, "God of the Open Air" and "Music," express very winningly not only his own vision but that of his contemporaries. Easy, fluent, various, hightoned,

* "The Angler's Reveille," *The Poems of Henry van Dyke* (New York, 1911), 6.

† "The Maryland Yellow-Throat," *The Poems of Henry van Dyke* (New York, 1911), 19.

‡ "The Hermit Thrush," *The Poems of Henry van Dyke* (New York, 1911), 21.

freshly colored, they put into words an educated yet naive joy in the sights and sounds of the world that is at once directly felt and conventionally expressed. They read as a whole better than they quote in part since it is the total mood rather than the individual passage—much less, line or phrase or word—that counts. But this romantic picture from "Music" is typical:

Then comes the adagio, with a yielding theme
Through which the violas flow soft as in a dream,
While horns and mild bassoons are heard
In tender tune, that seems to float
Like an enchanted boat
Upon the downward-gliding stream
Toward the allegro's wide, bright sea
Of dancing, glittering, blending tone
Where every instrument is sounding free,
And harps like wedding chimes are rung, and trumpets blown
Around the barque of love
That rides, with smiling skies above,
A royal galley, many oared,
Into the happy harbour of the perfect chord.*

Or the peroration of "God of the Open Air":

So let me keep
These treasures of the humble heart
In true possession, owning them by love;
And when at last I can no longer move
Among them freely, but must part
From the green fields and from the waters clear,
Let me not creep
Into some darkened room and hide
From all that makes the world so bright and dear;
But throw the windows wide
To welcome in the light;
And while I clasp a well belovèd hand,
Let me once more have sight
Of the deep sky and the far-smiling land,—
Then gently fall on sleep,

* "Music," *The Poems of Henry van Dyke* (New York, 1911), 242.

And breathe my body back to Nature's care,
My spirit out to thee, God of the Open Air.*

Here is a direct, uncomplicated approach to things that were regarded as in themselves beautiful—music and nature; in particular two strongly emergent aspects of the American culture of that time: an increasingly knowledgeable interest in serious music (note the terms like "allegro" and "theme" and "bassoon") and a turning towards nature in its more uncivilized forms—camping, big game hunting. When these two poems were published together in book form in 1904, the great American symphony orchestras had become established (the Philadelphia Orchestra just in 1900) and Theodore Roosevelt was celebrating a strenuous life in the wilderness. The van Dyke odes expressed these attractive leanings attractively.

Gilder, though not a specialist in birds, was working in the same general veins. But instead of the robin at dawn, he sings:

O, give me music in the twilight hour! †

or

Was ever music lovelier than tonight?
'Twas Schumann's Song of Moonlight; o'er the vale
The new moon lingered near the western hills;
The hearth fire glimmered low; but melting tones
Blotted all else from memory and thought,
And all the world was music. . . .‡

Obviously cultivated people listening in comfortable surroundings to the best in the repertoire; in fact, Schu-

* "God of the Open Air," *The Poems of Henry van Dyke* (New York, 1911), 61.

† "Music at Twilight," *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908), 384.

‡ "Music in Moonlight," *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908), 386.

mann. Again, here is musical culture and a *specific* detail, a certain song by a certain composer. This was a new but very characteristic note in the poetry of the Genteel Period. The older generation was really not musically educated to that point. One doesn't expect a special composition, like Schumann's "Mondnacht" to make a personal appearance in Poe or Longfellow.

> Rich is the music of sweet instruments,—
> The separate harp, cornet, oboe, and flute,
> The deep-souled viola, the 'cello grave,
> The many-mooded, singing violin,
> The infinite, triumphing, ivoried clavier. . . .*

A fine, crashing line; and by someone that obviously knew something about music. And art. And, of course, literature. But the open air was never forgotten. Nature and art could be easily reconciled:

> I read the poet's verses by the stream
> Where late with him I walked; the twilight gleam
> Faded, the page darkened, and from the sky
> The day, withdrawing gradual, came to die
> Slowly, into a memory and a sigh.
>
> There as I read, the poet's lyric dream
> Mixt with the silvery clamor of the stream,
> And, tho' the night fell, and I read no more,
> Still on and on the mingled measures pour:
> "Beauty is one," they murmur o'er and o'er.†

And this apt illustration of nature, music, and Gilder's musical-poetic nature:

> In this valley far and lonely
> Birds sang only,

* "The Voice," *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908), 387.

† "The Singing River," *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908), 454.

And the brook,
And the rain upon the leaves;
And all night long beneath the eaves
(While with soft breathings slept the housèd cattle)
The hivèd bees
Made music like the murmuring seas;
From lichened wall, from many a leafy nook,
The chipmunk sounded shrill his tiny rattle;
Through the warm day boomed low the droning flies,
And the huge mountain shook
With the organ of the skies.

II

Dear these songs unto my heart;
But the spirit longs for art,
Longs for music that is born
Of the human soul forlorn,
Of the beating heart of pleasure.
Thou, sweet girl, didst bring this boon
Without stint or measure!
Many a tune
From the masters of all time
In my waiting heart made rhyme.*

The best of both worlds: music and open air all at once, a truly suburban concord of city culture and rustic delights.

Other areas, other flower beds, seem less flourishing nowadays. Patriotism particularly, the "Hurrah for the boys in blue" mood of the Spanish-American War or the "Make the world safe for democracy" sentiments of the First World War no longer wear well. The State Poems are only too often longly rhetorical. Inscriptions do not seem as pithy as they did; memorials to the great dead have a gray sound, and certainly too much of the poetry of van Dyke and Gilder is concerned with all of these. Nor can we take religion quite so patly. Subject matter that was alive then is dead now.

One cannot say quite the same of Love; but that sort

* "Music in Solitude," *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908), 255-256.

of love, assumed to be strictly within the area of honorable courtship and marriage, that very attenuated and ideal romantic love is certainly dated. Such writing about love is not very characteristic of van Dyke; but Gilder specialized in it, as van Dyke did in birds.

After sorrow's night
Dawned the morning bright.
In dewy woods I heard
A golden-throated bird,
  And "Love, love, love" it sang,
    And "Love, love, love."

Evening shadows fell
In our happy dell.
From glimmering woods I heard
A golden-throated bird,
  And "Love, love, love" it sang,
    And "Love, love, love."

O, the summer night
Starry was and bright.
In the dark woods I heard
A golden-throated bird,
  And "Love, love, love" it sang,
    And "Love, love, love." *

Birds, flowers, streams, views of a safe ocean and a domestic mountain, art, especially the art of music—and love, love, love; all these bloomed in the Garden of Poesy. And what more specifically "garden" than the charming (if a bit silly) suite of Gilder's called *In Helena's Garden,* where fountains play and roses fade and the girls gather for tea about the millstone table?

Through the garden sunset-window
  Shines the sky of rose;
Deep the melting red, and deeper,
  Lovelier it grows.

* "After Sorrow's Night," *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908), 91.

Musically falls the fountain;
Twilight voices chime;
Visibly upon the cloudlands
Tread the feet of Time.*

One sees not so much a real garden as a certain kind of 1900 picture of one, full of ladies with dusky pompadours, white dresses trailing and roses at their (rather prominent) bosoms.

Out of Gilder's considerable opus—over five hundred poems as collected in the Household Edition of them published in 1908 by Houghton Mifflin in that series otherwise sacred to Lowell, Longfellow, and Whittier—one might easily rescue fifty which have their kind of charm. Of van Dyke's smaller bulk—less than two hundred titles, though many of these are longer poems—a score would be salvageable. Neither of the poets can be taken quite straight; rather, as period pieces, as "in the style of their time." But since the style of our time, as of the 1960's, remains totally conditioned by a revolt against the style of that time, since everything we value—originality, vividness, the concrete, the bold and impassioned, the complicated and experimental, the true-to-life and personal—we value, to some extent at least, *because* it is in contrast with the values of Gilder and van Dyke—convention, tradition, discretion, the ideal, the clear and harmonious, the romantic and otherworldly, the essentially public—it is hard to approach the poems even as period pieces. The faults, to most modern readers, are so obvious, the virtues so pale.

It is the second-handness of it all, the shopworn phrase, the familiar and easy emotion, that first appalls:

And best of all, along the way, friendship and mirth †

from van Dyke, or:

* "The Sunset Window," *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908), 431.

† "God of the Open Air," *The Poems of Henry van Dyke* (New York, 1911), 61.

Throughout Creation's bound, thrill answers thrill
And love to love replies. . . .*

from Gilder.

As dies the day, and the long twilight gleams,
Spare me my dreams! †

So much of it seems to say just nothing at all, especially the "nobler part"—the uplift, the high thoughts, the moralities.

If one can shift gear, throw off the limiting topical prejudices of a later taste, approach the poetry at least halfway, certainly a sweet residue remains. There is, for one thing, so much prettiness. Prettiness is a stock now selling way under par. Prettiness has been scorned for decades in the arts as the very sign of the beast—of slackness, of effeminacy, of commercialism. None the less it is appealing. The decorations which Helena Gilder made for her husband's slim volumes as they appeared strike the note. They consist of small black-and-white engraved cartouches of flower decoration, that kind of rather oriental nature-moment in which the 1870's and 1880's excel—sensitive, sophisticated realistic detail. The same kind of thing can be found in the poetry of the Genteel School—if one looks.

In the time of sun and showers,
Of skies half black, half clear;
Twixt melting snows and flowers;
At the poise of the flying year . . .‡

A silken curtain veils the skies,
And half conceals from pensive eyes
The bronzing tokens of the fall . . .**

* "The Old Faith," *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908), 370.

† "Spare Me My Dreams," *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908), 374.

‡ "Song of Early Summer," *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908), 76.

** "Indian Summer," *The Poems of Henry van Dyke* (New York, 1911), 42.

Trembling with tenderness,
While all the woods expand
In shimmering clouds of rose and gold and green . . .*

When, like a changing dream, the long cloud-wedge,
Brown-gray,
Grew saffron underneath and, ere I knew,
The interspace, green-blue . . .†

These charming little vignettes star the pages of either of these poets, as the charming little engraved vignettes star with flowers the books of Gilder. Pretty.

And the melodiousness:

Because the rose must fade
Shall I not love the rose?
Because the summer shade
Passes when winter blows,
Shall I not rest me here
In the cool air? ‡

Nay! Nay! Silent are the unreturning;
Silent, silent are the unreturning! **

Tho summer days are all too fleet,
Not yet the year is touched with cold;
Through the long billows of the wheat
The green is lingering in the gold.††

These are recognizably Gilder: a liquid fall of syllables.

When May comes down the lane,
Her airy lovers throng

* "Spring in the North," *The Poems of Henry van Dyke* (New York, 1911), 36.

† "Sunset from the Train," *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908), 90.

‡ "Because the Rose Must Fade," *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908), 231.

** "The Unreturning," *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908), 235.

†† "Late Summer," *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908), 260.

To welcome her with song
And follow in her train. . . .*

This is the song the Brown Thrush flings
Out of his thicket of roses;
Hark how it bubbles and rings,
Mark how it closes: †

Sweet are the primroses pale and the violets after a shower;
Sweet are the borders of pinks and the blossoming grapes
on the bower . . .‡

No less recognizably, here is van Dyke. Yet both follow recognizably in the wake of Tennyson, Longfellow, and many another earlier melodist.

Pretty vignettes of nature, melodious cadences (and melodiousness does not come by accident), moods of joy or pensiveness, and every now and then a real, if never very urgent, emotion. Gilder's poem about Belle Vue, his Old House, though scarcely original, strikes a true note of nostalgia, has a ring of actual place. Van Dyke's ode for the hundredth anniversary of Lawrenceville School in 1910, the "Spirit of the Everlasting Boy," has something surprisingly and warmly boyish about it (as opposed to his deadly ode for Princeton on its one hundred and fiftieth). Both these better Jersey poems touch real earth, Jersey earth, if only lightly.

Mood and charm, however, not earth and emotion, are what one must look for. Besides these purely aesthetic virtues, there is much to be said for the total poetic world of which these two Jerseymen were final representatives and defenders. Since it was a public not a private garden they kept, everyone respectable, that is, most of the "literate public," was allowed in. Crowds came and wan-

* "The Echo in the Heart," *The Poems of Henry van Dyke* (New York, 1911), 265.

† "The Angler's Reveille," *The Poems of Henry van Dyke* (New York, 1911), 8.

‡ "The Lily of Yorrow," *The Poems of Henry van Dyke* (New York, 1911), 53.

dered with their families through the flowery parterres, rested by the tinkling fountains. Nice young girls lay in hammocks and read poems to each other; fathers read poetry aloud by the fire to their children. It was a total, unified, traditional culture firmly tied to State and Church, liberal but limited, full of subtle censorships but not designedly suppressive. Presidents and kings, Englishmen and Americans, soldiers and artists and clergymen and journalists were welcome there; even a scientist or two. It was a poetic world recognized by both the university and the man, or especially the woman in (but oh not *of*) the street. Now that poetry lives outside the gate, each lonely poet chipping at his private rock pile, it is possible to look on this lost world, this Public Garden, as a sort of Eden.

The generation of the First World War couldn't wait to break down the walls, bust through the gate, muck up the parterres, tear down the statues and fountains, and get OUT. In the process, Poetry got pushed back into Life, the garden was destroyed and the gardeners were guillotined. Aldrich, Gilder, and van Dyke, as literary figures, were mercilessly murdered.

Here are two examples of what took place then. When Sinclair Lewis was given the Nobel prize for literature in 1930, the first American to receive that honor, Henry van Dyke, whilom president of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, was quoted by a reporter as saying, incautiously, that this award was an "insult to America." As is common in such cases, he said he was misquoted. He said that he said it was "a back handed compliment" to America; and what he said he said from the inconspicuous platform of a Germantown Business Men's Luncheon Club. Lewis' rebuttal was not inconspicuous; it was made to the world in the address of acceptance made before the Swedish Academy.

There is in America a learned and most amiable old gentleman who has been a pastor, a university professor and a diplomat. As a writer he is chiefly known for his pleasant little

essays on the joy of fishing. I do not suppose that professional fishermen, whose lives depend on the run of cod and herring, find it altogether an amusing occupation, but from these essays I learned, as a boy, that there is something very important and spiritual about catching fish, if you have no need of doing so.

This scholar stated, and publicly, that in awarding the Nobel Prize to a person who has scoffed at American institutions . . . the Nobel Committee . . . had insulted America. I should have supposed that so international a scholar . . . [would not have thought Sweden to be] . . . shocked by a writer whose most anarchistic assertion has been that America, with all her wealth and power, has not yet produced a civilization good enough to satisfy the deepest wants of human creatures. . . .

I have at such length discussed this criticism of the learned fisherman not because it has any conceivable importance in itself. . . .

Lewis goes on to mention others who might have deserved the prize: Theodore Dreiser because he has "cleared the trail from Victorian and Howellsian timidity and gentility in American fiction to honesty and boldness and passion of life" (a trail blazed straight to Metalious and Mailer and Miller); Sherwood Anderson who "came to housebound and airless America like a great free Western wind . . ." and other liberators such as James Branch Cabell, Henry Mencken, Upton Sinclair, Joseph Hergesheimer.

Ludwig Lewisohn, in his *Expression in America* of 1932 (in which he proves conclusively that American literature has still produced no Goethe), performs a similar autopsy on Gilder. Gilder, fortunately, was dead. Lewisohn operates on the whole Genteel School, beginning with Taylor, whom he had to admire a bit because of Taylor's admiration of Goethe. "There is an almost symbolical pathos about Bayard Taylor. So much ardor, ambition, knowledge and a product so diffuse and faded." Aldrich comes off better, since he "made a virtue of his weakness . . . Instead of going feebly through grandiose poetic gestures, the commonest and worst fault of the

polite poets, he . . . practiced a tight and precise little art."

But "little can be said of or for the many ambitious verses of . . . Stedman" or Joaquin Miller or John Bannister Tabb (so suddenly and surprisingly anthologized by Karl Shapiro as a Baltimorean and a Catholic) * or Lloyd Mifflin or Edward R. Sill or the "blurred idealisms" of George Edward Woodberry:

It was an age not of silver but of tin. The blight of politeness and false dignity . . . of correct sentiments and nerveless meter let no one escape.

If I dwell for another moment on one more poet of the age of tin, it is to illustrate . . . the necessity and splendor of that modern revolt that . . . swept like a cleansing wind through the wilted and withered forest of the genteel tradition.

The poet I select is Richard Watson Gilder. There have been . . . mediocre poets before. What makes Gilder significant is the discrepancy between the quality of his work and his standing and reputation. . . . Gilder's poetry is the image of the man, the age, the literary taste. . . . Whatever sounded high and pure was poetry, was literature.

Lewisohn quotes some of Gilder at his worst:

> Thou art so used, Love, to thine own bird's song,
> Sung to thine ear in Love's low monotone,
> Sung to thee only, Love, to thee alone
> Of all the listening world.

and so on; though his last quote might conceivably backfire a bit:

> If you wish, go be a pig
> In and out of season;
> But do not bore us with a big
> Philosophic reason.

Already by the 1930's the reputations of these Genteel

* Karl J. Shapiro (ed.), *American Poetry* (New York, 1960). Shapiro also includes Bayard Taylor.

Poets were totally demolished. Lewis and Lewisohn were flogging dead horses. By the 1960's they are all (along with Lewisohn) comfortably buried. Nobody remembers even who they were.

The school did have literary descendants, the gallant band of the Traditionalists who kept the older techniques and methods and even subject matters going through the Terror. Gilder and van Dyke especially had very direct poetic offspring. Gilder's mood and meter is obviously, if no doubt unconsciously, reflected in the poetry of John Hall Wheelock; van Dyke's in the poetry of that later Princetonian, Struthers Burt.

John Wheelock has, through the modern decades, been given a special dispensation, saved from the guillotine perhaps because of his immense kindness to and understanding of all sorts of younger poets. His poetry itself remains full of echoes of Gilder, though he deliberately turned towards the city that Gilder avoided, and carried the melancholy and love into passion and pessimism. From his earlier poetry (1913):

> Along the mournful eastern rim
> Day lifts a flaming crest—
> Ah, love, the night, with all its joy
> Ebbs out along the west.
> I would not rise with day but die
> With darkness, at your breast.*

This, except perhaps for the too-explicit last lines, could easily be a song of Gilder's. Again,

> I roamed, in the gray evening, over field and hill—
> Above me the pale clouds were restless wanderers;
> And when the day was gone, and all the fields were still,
> The thought of you, deep in my heart, was like a
> thousand stars.†

* John Hall Wheelock, *Poems, 1911-1936* (New York, 1936).

† John Hall Wheelock, *Poems, 1911-1936* (New York, 1936). These and the preceding lines from "Songs" are reprinted here with permission of the publisher, Charles Scribner's Sons.

Wheelock has compounded the connection by also marrying a de Kay, Mrs. Gilder's niece, by sporting a fine romantic, somewhat melancholy moustache much like Gilder's, and by being one of the most influential and respected editors of Scribner's. It's almost a family resemblance.

The family resemblance between van Dyke and Burt is equally close; they were in fact very dimly related through a Germantown ancestor. Both were short, charming, rather aggressive, both sportsmen, outdoors men, expert fishermen, both ardent patriots, Democrats, and Princetonians. Burt studied with van Dyke in college, and the friendship endured. Both celebrated nature and the open air, music and love in jaunty, rather Anglophile meters with that same odd combination of sophistication and naivete, directness and conventionality.

> Some men are troubled by the sea
> And some take the blue hills as a lover,
> And some in a forest lie all day
> Hearing the brown thrush over and over,
> But the man I speak of loved a river.
> Loved the shallows of it, rippling,
> Loved its reaches, sunlight stippling,
> And hour by hour would watch an eddy . . .*

A measure of the difference is that this man drowns himself in his river. No Henry van Dyke fisherman would dream of doing such a thing; any more than a Gilder lover would indicate too plainly that he'd spent a whole night on the beloved's breast.

> The Yellowthroat, the amber flageolet
> Pipes in the willows where the leaves are wet.
>
> Shadows on a bickering stream,
> Cherries on a southern wall
> Gave him joy, one and all.†

* Struthers Burt, *When I Grew Up to Middle Age* (New York, 1925), 11.

† Struthers Burt, *When I Grew Up to Middle Age* (New York, 1925), 11.

From either of these later poets one can cull constant reminders of that Jersey melodiousness and love of the pastoral, of Gilder melancholy, of van Dyke cheer.

Burt, dead in 1954, is out of print; but Wheelock, still very much alive, continues to be read, published, and honored; and conceivably might see through to a reaction against the Rebellion and a revaluation of the school which he continues to represent.

That such a revaluation is due and is inevitable no one can doubt. What stood for freedom and revolt and a new world in 1930 now has become academic dogma. One *must* be original, one must be private, one must grope and despair. The taboos against joy, prettiness, and a poetry addressed to the respectable public are just as stringent now as ever were the genteel taboos against what was shocking, obscure, or crude. Obviously where there is a taboo there will be someone to violate it.

On the other hand, one cannot foresee any enormous reinstatement of the Genteel School, unless any instatement of any kind would amount to an enormous reinstatement. That a whole large segment of American poetry—the works of Boker, Taylor, Stedman, Stoddard, Woodberry, Cawein, of Aldrich, Gilder, van Dyke, and dozens of others—should be totally ignored is certainly insufferable. If T. S. Eliot can see fit (for no doubt peculiar literary-political reasons) to lecture on Akenside in Princeton, one can expect some great Pooh-Bah in 1990 or 2010 to lecture in Princeton on van Dyke. These reputations have nowhere to go but up.

When I was a freshman there in 1932 I went to call at Avalon. In the autumn of the year he died, Henry van Dyke sat in his darkened study at his desk, a very frail old man. Out west through the big window, paned at the edges with artistically leaded irregularity, the sunset was streaked red behind the trees of Bayard Lane and beyond. He talked of poetry, how the soul of true poetry was fled, how the fragmentary nonsense of the modern school had betrayed the great tradition handed down from the Masters. The Garden of Poesy was wrecked and van Dyke had lived to see the new disorder. He didn't like it.

Around him were photographs and statuettes and books signed by friends, mementoes of Presidents and poets from a day when they spoke the same language, and spoke long and intimately to one another. Out in the shadowy hall beyond was a huge stuffed fish and a bust of Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

He died in the spring. No one wanted to live in Avalon. A local dramatic group tried to use it for a clubhouse, but it was too expensive for them, too big and too old. The great elm died. Avalon was torn down and on its site is the new Princeton YMCA, a substitution of which Henry van Dyke might well have approved; though obviously he must have hoped Avalon would be a shrine as Elmwood and the Longfellow House became shrines—in an age when the public cared enough about poets to consecrate such shrines. And when poets cared enough about the public to write for them.

Perhaps in a later day, despite the dearth of shrines, at least some respect may be paid to these two Jerseymen and to their fragile, but not always unattractive, garden poetry. It is certainly fitting at least for New Jersey to remember them, however briefly, on its three-hundredth birthday.

Bibliographical Note

A complete bibliography of the works of Henry van Dyke and Richard Watson Gilder would be a formidable undertaking—and one having little relationship to their poetry. Both men were especially busy as writers for magazines, in prose and poetry; and both were involved in various political controversies which reached print in several forms.

A listing of secondary sources, on the other hand, presents quite a different problem. There is but a handfull of authoritative studies treating either the poets or their specific tradition. Among the studies consulted and quoted in this essay are Ludwig Lewisohn's *Expression in America* (New York, 1932) and *American Poetry* (New York, 1960) by Karl J. Shapiro.

A major portion of this essay deals, of course, with writers

and poets who were influenced by or reacted against the Garden Poets. But again to list all literary works that have touched upon the poetry of van Dyke and Gilder would be an impossible task. Bayard Taylor's *Poet's Journal* (Boston, 1863), Struthers Burt's *When I Grew Up to Middle Age* (New York, 1925), John Hall Wheelock's collection of *Poems, 1911-1936* (New York, 1936), and, of course, Sinclair Lewis' *The Man from Main Street,* from the Pocket Book edition of *A Sinclair Lewis Reader,* edited by Harry E. Maule and Melville H. Cane (Baltimore, 1963)—all quoted in the text—form but a small sampling.

HENRY VAN DYKE

The published works of Henry van Dyke—in book or pamphlet form—run to over sixty titles, most of them prose. Almost all of these are included in the Avalon Edition of his complete works (New York, 1920-1927). A helpful bibliography of his works can be found in an anonymous typescript housed in the Princeton University Library (catalogue number DRB.-3971.4.05) and a chronological list of his works is contained in Tertius van Dyke's biography, noted below. All the poetry quoted in this essay is taken from *The Poems of Henry van Dyke* (New York, 1911).

The best sources for biographical information are *Henry van Dyke: A Biography* (New York, 1935) by Tertius van Dyke and Roland Mushat Frye's study on van Dyke in *Sons of the Prophets,* edited by Hugh T. Kerr (Princeton, 1963).

RICHARD WATSON GILDER

Except for *Grover Cleveland: A Record of Friendship* (New York, 1910) and a few miscellaneous pamphlets, Gilder's published works in book form are confined to his poetry. The verses quoted in this essay are from *The Poems of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston, 1908). His poetry was actually published over the years, beginning in 1876, in a series of small books. All that he wished preserved, however, were included in *The Poems* of 1908.

A valuable source of information is *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder,* edited by Rosamond Gilder (Boston, 1916).

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

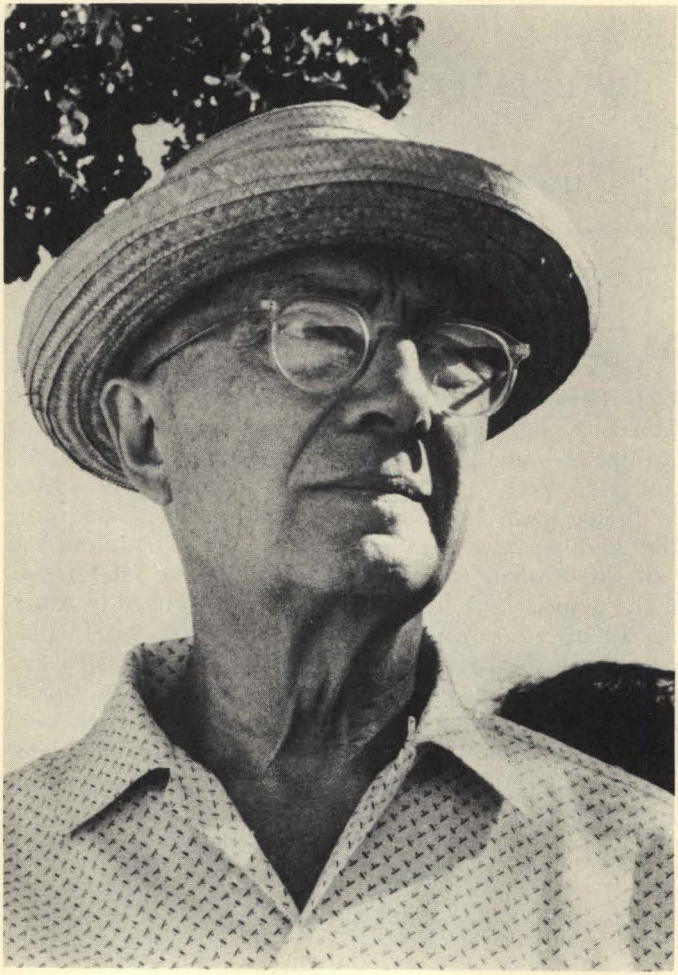
BY A. WALTON LITZ

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS *

How shall I be a mirror to this modernity?
—"The Wanderer"

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS was born in Rutherford, New Jersey, on September 17, 1883, and died there on March 4, 1963. Except for his two years of study in European schools, his medical training in Philadelphia and New York, and two visits to Europe in the 1920's, Williams spent his entire life in Rutherford, pursuing the double career of physician and poet.[1] His father was "an Englishman who never got over being an Englishman," [2] an international businessman who lived in America all his adult years but never renounced his English citizenship. Williams' mother came from a Caribbean family of mixed French, Spanish, and Jewish blood; before her marriage she had studied art in Paris, and she never adjusted to the routine existence of a New

* Selections from the following works of William Carlos Williams are quoted by permission of New Directions. *The Collected Earlier Poems of William Carlos Williams,* copyright © 1938, 1951, by William Carlos Williams. *Paterson,* copyright © 1946, 1948, 1949, 1951, 1958 by William Carlos Williams; copyright © 1963 by Florence Williams. *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems,* copyright © 1949, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1959, 1960, 1961, and 1962 by William Carlos Williams.



William Carlos Williams
Photograph by Tram

Jersey town. Late in his life William Carlos Williams said that he had "always held her as a mythical figure, remote from me, detached, looking down on an area in which I happened to live, a fantastic world where she was moving as a more or less pathetic figure." [3] His mother could speak very little English when Williams was born, and Spanish and French were the languages most often heard at home. Such an exotic heritage might be expected to produce a cosmopolitan poet, one who would feel more at home in Paris than in Rutherford, but instead it produced in Williams the passionate devotion to place of a first-generation citizen, a fierce determination to ground his life and language in the particulars of local experience. Today we think of William Carlos Williams as an American writer whose work was deeply rooted in his native New Jersey, just as we think of William Faulkner as an artist who built his universal drama out of the local materials of his Mississippi home. But it is important to realize that whereas Faulkner inherited the traditions and attitudes explored in his art, Williams had to discover his own tradition: Williams' "America" is a do-it-yourself construction, reflecting the strengths and prejudices of one man. And yet, although it is frequently grotesque, Williams' world is not limited. He could easily have become the conventional regionalist, the master of "local color," but he was saved from this fate by an intuitive conviction that local experience must be "lifted" to the level of general form. He knew that saturation in native materials is meaningless until those materials have been processed into form. This preoccupation with the means of expression, with pattern and language, was part of Williams' European inheritance, and his struggle to free American poetry from foreign or outdated models owed its vigor and direction to his feeling for those models. It was the "exotic" in Williams that prevented him from being submerged in the materials of his immediate experience. That tension between the exotic and the familiar, the cosmopolitan and the

regional, which characterized Williams' life was also the controlling force in his art.

Writing to a fellow poet in 1957, Williams offered this homespun advice: "The only thing I have learned in my life is that you can't run away from your own life. When you go to China or London or Lima you won't find anything that isn't in your own back yard." [4] This is a major theme which runs through all Williams' works, but we should not be led by its conventional appearance into thinking that Williams' view of the relationship between the local and the general was also conventional. From the beginning of his career Williams realized that the problem faced by a poet who wishes to mirror the life of modern America is one of language, not subject matter, and Williams' complex artistic development may be seen as a search for the "measure" and idiom of American life as he had experienced it.

Before undertaking a survey of Williams' artistic development, we would do well to note the essential quality of his mind. Unlike most artists with whom we are familiar, Williams was a thoroughgoing pragmatist. This pragmatic outlook was probably the result of his early scientific training, and his practical work as a physician. Although in the early stages of his career Williams often felt that poetry and medicine were competing forces in his life, he later came to recognize their interdependence. His *Autobiography* is a running testament to this identity of vocations:

> Was I not interested in man? There the thing was, right in front of me. I could touch it, smell it. It was myself, naked, just as it was, without a lie telling itself to me in its own terms. . . . The physician enjoys a wonderful opportunity actually to witness the words being born. Their actual colors and shapes are laid before him carrying their tiny burdens which he is privileged to take into his care with their unspoiled newness. . . . 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.[5]

Like the American pragmatist John Dewey, whose *Art as Experience* he greatly admired, Williams believed that literature is in need of constant refreshment from "materials outside the esthetic tradition," since of all the arts it is "most subject to convention and stereotype."[6] The source of literature is ordinary speech, and the poet must keep in direct contact with this source if his work is not to degenerate into dead stereotypes. The creation of a work of art is a cultural activity.

We might label the method of Williams' mind as experimental; certainly his model is the empirical process. He shares the empiricist's belief that all our most general ideas derive from things we can observe and point to. At times Williams reminds us of the nineteenth-century inventor at his workbench, patiently testing various combinations and waiting for the moment of illumination. This pragmatic attitude was the source of both his strength and his weakness. On many occasions it led to the freshness and tangible force which make Williams' best poems stand out from the page, as if they were three-dimensional objects. But all too often it collapsed the distinction between life and the poem (a distinction Williams would probably have denied), thus placing the poet at the mercy of every sensation or impulse, denying him the right to select and control.

All great art is marked by an interaction between tradition and invention, but Williams frequently emphasizes invention for its own sake. Contemporaneity becomes a virtue in itself, and literature—like the latest news—is capable of being outdated. This devotion to the contemporary, and distrust of the past, often led Williams to announce old theories as if they were new (especially in the realm of literary criticism), and cut him off from a whole dimension of modern literature. For

example, he was quick to recognize that James Joyce had created a new category of understanding in *Finnegans Wake,* but he could not acknowledge Joyce's place at the end of a long tradition. Too often Williams displays that anti-intellectualism which is part of the American writer's "primitivism." Throughout most of his career he clung to the doctrinaire belief that a new culture demands the destruction of the past. As we shall see when we come to Williams' work of the 1920's, his running quarrel with T. S. Eliot was essentially a battle between the pragmatist (who sees all values as relative) and the traditionalist (who wishes to assert absolute values).

Like most young poets, Williams began by accepting the tastes of his age and imitating the verse that pleased his ear.[7] As an undergraduate he learned Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* by heart, and was enamored of the Romantic poets, especially Keats. His earliest extant poem (1908) was cast in the form of academic romanticism, as can be seen from the opening lines:

> When Chivalry like summer's crimson fruit
> From blossom, April's flimsy pride and all
> The ripening seasons, burst at length full frocked
> Resplendant on her prime; when kings were young
> And liegemen bold ambitious and full oft
> Of equal blood with a sovran lived a knight
> Don Pedro was he clept, Prince of Navarre . . .[8]

Williams' first volume, the privately printed *Poems* (1909), contains a number of academic exercises in the Keatsian manner; all of these poems were excluded by Williams from his collected volumes. Yet even while he was composing the poems which appeared in his first book, Williams was vaguely dissatisfied with their aim. He had the definite feeling that he was not English, that his verse would have to conform to the rhythms of the American language; and as a result he began to write "quick spontaneous poems" which were Whitmanesque, in contrast to the "studied Keatsian sonnets" of the 1909

Poems. He had read Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and not liked most of it, but the opening lines of "Song of Myself" had impressed him and set up a counteraction to the influence of academic romanticism.

It is with *The Tempers* (1913) that we see Williams' first attempts to extricate himself from this conflict between the dead forms of imitated English verse and the "raw vigor" of Whitman. Publication of *The Tempers* was arranged by Williams' friend Ezra Pound, already a leading figure in the London literary world. Williams and Pound had met at the University of Pennsylvania, and in 1910 Williams visited Pound in London. At this point in their careers Pound was clearly the master, although Williams must have acknowledged this rather reluctantly. In his *Personae* (1909) Pound had established a distinctive voice and manner, while Williams was still unsure of his own direction, and it is not surprising that *The Tempers* echoes many of Pound's characteristic effects. Poems such as "Postlude" (which Pound later singled out for special praise) recreate the mood of Pound's "Provençal" lyrics. Here is the opening stanza of "Postlude":

> Now that I have cooled to you
> Let there be gold of tarnished masonry,
> Temples soothed by the sun to ruin
> That sleep utterly.
> Give me hand for the dances,
> Ripples at Philae, in and out,
> And lips, my Lesbian,
> Wall flowers that once were flame.[9]

This is Williams' early romanticism revitalized by a contemporary influence. But *The Tempers* also contains poems (such as "Mezzo Forte" and "Contemporania") where we hear a voice from outside Pound's repertoire, and in his verse published immediately after *The Tempers* Williams set the pattern for his future development. The style of *Al Que Quiere!* (1917) is completely

his own. Even the dust jacket announces a newfound individualism, as Williams later acknowledged:

> The figure on the cover was taken from a design on a pebble. To me the design looked like a dancer, and the effect of the dancer was very important—a natural, completely individual pattern. The artist made the outline around the design too geometrical; it should have been irregular, as the pebble was.[10]

The aim of the entire volume is suggested by this design: a natural, completely individual pattern, which rejects the imposed and falsifying orders of conventional art. Williams seems to have himself in mind in the short poem "El Hombre," which Wallace Stevens admired and later interpreted in his "Nuances of a Theme by Williams":

> It's a strange courage
> you give me ancient star:
>
> Shine alone in the sunrise
> toward which you lend no part! *

Williams' determination to confront immediate sensations without the benefit of any "humanizing" symbolism, to reject all reflected light, is clearly imaged in the volume's program piece, "Sub Terra." I quote the first and last stanzas:

> Where shall I find you,
> you my grotesque fellows
> that I seek everywhere
> to make up my band?
> None, not one
> with the earthy tastes I require;
> the burrowing pride that rises
> subtly as on a bush in May. . . .

* William Carlos Williams, *Collected Earlier Poems* (Norfolk, Conn., 1951), 140.

You to come with me
poking into negro houses
with their gloom and smell!
in among children
leaping around a dead dog!
Mimicking
onto the lawns of the rich!
You!
to go with me a-tip-toe,
head down under heaven,
nostrils lipping the wind! *

Al Que Quiere! ("To Him Who Wants It") is infused with the confidence of a man who has at last sighted his proper subject. Part of this confidence must have stemmed from Williams' conviction that American art was on the threshold of a new era. Since the publication of *The Tempers* he had come to know a number of painters and writers who shared his dissatisfaction with inherited form; it seemed that New York might become the center of American literary activity. "Sub Terra" looks forward to a new generation of writers who will share Williams' direct vision. But the confident tone of *Al Que Quiere!* also reflects Williams' delight in a new sense of poetic structure, which must be attributed in large measure to the influence of Imagism.

Imagism as a literary "movement" is now a chapter of literary history, and Williams' role in the conflict of personalities is none of our concern.[11] But the theory and practice of Imagism had a profound impact on Williams' verse, and deserves some consideration. When seen in perspective Imagism appears as one of those periodic attacks upon poetic diction which signal new periods of vitality in English poetry. Like the criticism of eighteenth-century poetic diction made by Wordsworth in *Lyrical Ballads,* Imagism called for a revitalization of

* William Carlos Williams, *Collected Earlier Poems* (Norfolk, Conn., 1951), 117-118.

verse through a return to the "language really used by men," and like Wordsworth's reaction it created in turn its own poetic diction. By 1917 Imagism had collapsed into free verse, and Eliot and Pound were already attacking the "formlessness" of the movement. Williams shared their disillusionment with the direction taken by Imagism; in retrospect he was to say that "Imagism . . . lost its place finally because as a form it completely lacked structural necessity. The image served for everything so that the structure, a weaker and weaker free verse, degenerated finally into a condition very nearly resembling that of the sonnet." [12] In other words, Imagism as a self-conscious literary program soon became as sterile as the diction it was intended to replace (in Williams' critical vocabulary "the sonnet" is shorthand for "stereotyped form"). But whereas in Pound's career Imagism was a temporary program, a cleansing of the palette which was superseded by new interests, Williams' entire career may be seen as an elaborate working-out of the implications of Imagist theory. Therefore a brief summary of Imagist theory will serve as a guide to Williams' artistic development.[13]

The first tenet of Imagism was concrete, objective treatment of the subject, without decoration or an overlay of "symbolic" commentary. The perfect symbol is the natural object. The second tenet was that poetry should follow the sequence of the musical phrase, not that of conventional meters: there is an "absolute rhythm" appropriate to each subject, and this absolute rhythm is based on natural speech. Poetry must be at least as well written as prose; that is to say, it must be as concentrated and precise as the language of Flaubert. Poetry must contain nothing that could not be actually *said* in the stress of some emotion.

Williams' entire achievement can be viewed as an exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of this position. Like Wordsworth, Williams held the "primitivistic" belief that common objects and ordinary speech are fundamentally poetic, a belief which may also be dis-

cerned beneath the sophisticated surface of Imagism. Where Williams differed in theory and practice from the Romantics was in his refusal to transform common life and ordinary language through a transcendental symbolism. In his 1939 essay "Against the Weather" Williams makes this difference plain:

> Man is mysterious in his own right and does not submit to more than his common sensual relationships to "explain" him. Anything else approaches the trivial.
>
> He is a man to be judged, to live or die, like other men by what he does. No symbolism is acceptable. No symbolism can be permitted to obscure the real purpose, to lift the world of the senses to the level of the imagination and so give it new currency.[14]

"To lift the world of the senses to the level of the imagination" without resorting to transcendental symbolism, without going beyond the "common sensual relationships"—this was Williams' lifelong challenge, and it was essentially a problem of language. We shall see that in all the pragmatic strategies and experiments Williams adopted as he sought a solution to this problem, the metrical and verbal ideals of Imagism were never abandoned.

The twenty years after *Al Que Quiere!,* Williams' middle years, were the most complex and confusing of his career. It was in those years that he felt his self-imposed isolation most keenly, but also felt dissatisfied with the possible alternatives. This *malaise* is first evident in *Kora in Hell: Improvisations,* which was written in 1917-1918 but not published until 1920. *Kora in Hell* is an intensely personal document. Williams later referred to it as a book which "reveals myself to me." [15] The difficulty confronted in the *Improvisations* is that "of lifting to the imagination those things which lie under the direct scrutiny of the senses, close to the nose." In his long Prologue, Williams affirms his belief that the true value of an object is its individual character and that "the associational or sentimental value" is false; the

Improvisations are attempts to insulate immediate sensations from all "associational or sentimental values." [16] The manner in which *Kora in Hell* was composed is illuminating. For a year Williams would come home and before going to bed write a brief passage based on the day's events and his reactions to them. At the end of the year he made a selection of these improvisations, supplied the more obscure with interpretations, and decided to publish the entries without further explanation, hoping that "the surface appearance of the whole would please all the ablest I was approaching." [17] Here is a typical improvisation and interpretation:

> But for broken feet beating, beating on worn flagstones I would have danced to my knees at the fiddle's first run. But here's evening and there they scamper back of the world chasing the sun around! And it's daybreak in Calcutta! So lay aside, let's draw off from the town and look back awhile. See, there it rises out of the swamp and the mists already blowing their sleepy bagpipes.

> *Often a poem will have merit because of some one line or even one meritorious word. So it hangs heavily on its stem but still secure, the tree unwilling to release it.*[18]

But in spite of Williams' insistence on the "uniqueness" of *Kora in Hell,* the work appears in retrospect as a modish and mannered performance, an artificial evocation of immediate impressions. M. René Taupin has shown how closely the *Improvisations* parallel Rimbaud's *Illuminations,*[19] and we may consider *Kora in Hell* as an exotic counterpoint to *Al Que Quiere!*

Of even more interest than the *Improvisations* themselves is the long, rambling Prologue which Williams wrote after finishing the rest of the book. Filled with personal references and letters from fellow authors (Pound, H. D., Wallace Stevens), the Prologue reveals Williams' personal and artistic stresses. The tone alternates between confidence and self-doubt. If we com-

pare the 1918 Prologue with Williams' 1915 New York Letter to the London *Egoist* we are immediately aware of a striking change in attitude. The New York Letter opens with the statement that "in New York in the spring of 1915, one was feeling a strange quickening of artistic life," and closes with the cry, "America has triumphed!" [20] The entire letter is devoted to the vitality of the new painters and the promise of those writers who were involved with the little magazine *Others*. Williams obviously felt in 1915 that the "spiritual controls" of artistic life had passed to America, and that he would play a prominent part in this new movement. But in the Prologue to *Kora in Hell* Williams is on the defensive: T. S. Eliot's *Prufrock and Other Observations* has appeared, and Williams already senses that American writers in the coming years will follow the way of Pound and Eliot, not the way marked out by "Sub Terra." The Prologue attacks Pound and Eliot as "men content with the connotations of their masters." [21]

> Imagine an international congress of poets at Paris or Versailles, Remy de Gourmont (now dead) presiding, poets all speaking five languages fluently. Ezra stands up to represent U.S. verse and De Gourmont sits down smiling. Ezra begins by reading [Eliot's] "La Figlia Que [sic] Piange." It would be a pretty pastime to gather into a mental basket the fruits of that reading from the minds of the ten Frenchmen present; their impressions of the sort of United States that very fine flower was picked from. . . .
>
> I praise those who have the wit and courage, and the conventionality, to go direct toward their vision of perfection in an objective world where the signposts are clearly marked, viz., to London. But confine them in hell for their paretic assumption that there is no alternative but their own groove.[22]

The title *Kora in Hell* sums up Williams' feeling: Persephone, the springtime, has been temporarily imprisoned in darkness.

Already in the Prologue to *Kora in Hell* T. S. Eliot is given the symbolic role of enemy to American letters

which he plays throughout Williams' later writings (Pound, as personal friend, receives somewhat gentler treatment). In the chapter of his *Autobiography* entitled "The Waste Land," Williams recollects the years of the First World War as "the years just before the great catastrophe to our letters—the appearance of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land.*"

> There was heat in us, a core and a drive that was gathering headway upon the theme of a rediscovery of a primary impetus, the elementary principle of all art, in the local conditions. Our work staggered to a halt for a moment under the blast of Eliot's genius which gave the poem back to the academics. We did not know how to answer him.[23]

To Williams, T. S. Eliot was the archetype of the artist who rejects the challenge of his native language in order to please the academics, those "clerks/got out of hand forgetting for the most part/to whom they are beholden." [24] In *Paterson, Book One* (written during the 1940's) Williams recreated his uneasy emotions of the early 1920's:

> Moveless
> he envies the men that ran
> and could run off
> toward the peripheries—
> to other centers, direct—
> for clarity (if
> they found it)
> loveliness and
> authority in the world—
>
> a sort of springtime
> toward which their minds aspired
> but which he saw,
> within himself—ice bound *

Williams' bitterness toward Eliot, and wilful misunderstanding of Eliot's aims, must be seen as the defensive

* William Carlos Williams, *Paterson* (New York, 1963), 48.

gesture of a man whose deepest convictions have been directly challenged. Williams' insistence on invention, on the necessity to remake the world at every moment, is diametrically opposed to Eliot's emphasis on tradition; his plea for a personal art runs counter to Eliot's insistence upon impersonality. It is important to understand that Williams' attacks on Eliot were not the result of bad manners, and only partly the result of personal grievance: Eliot's success in dominating a whole generation of American writers seemed to Williams to have destroyed the promising beginnings of a native literature.

When asked to contribute an essay on Walt Whitman to a collection honoring the centenary of *Leaves of Grass* (1855-1955), Williams used "the case of Mr. Eliot" as a foil to Whitman's achievement, thereby summing up his long quarrel with Eliot.

> The case of Mr. Eliot is in this respect interesting. He began writing at Harvard from a thoroughly well-schooled background and produced a body of verse that was immediately so successful that when his poem *The Waste Land* was published, it drove practically everyone else from the field. . . . The tendency toward freedom in the verse forms, which seemed to be thriving among American poets, was definitely checked and the stage was taken over for other things. I shall never forget the impression created by *The Waste Land;* it was as if the bottom had dropped out of everything.[25]

Throughout this essay Williams demonstrates his conviction that language is a cultural activity, that the poem is an extension of life itself, and that the achievement of American "modernism" has cut the poet off from his proper source. Williams' pragmatism, his relativism, is constantly in evidence:

> A new order had hit the world, a relative order, a new measure with which no one was familiar. The thing that no one realized, and this includes Whitman himself, is that the native which they were dealing with was no longer English but a new language akin to the New World to which its nature accorded in subtle ways that they did not recognize.[26]

In this essay on Whitman, as in all his confrontations with "the case of Mr. Eliot," Williams' strengths and defects are at maximum exposure. At times he seems determined to make a virtue out of ignorance, out of his inability to exercise the historical imagination. Yet the shock of Eliot's ascendancy did convince Williams that if he were to compete, he would have to work out for himself an alternate "tradition": hence his important and impressive *In the American Grain,* a re-seeing of the past in terms of contemporary needs.

In the American Grain (1925) is not an historical work; like D. H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature,* it reshapes the past to fit the needs of the author's personality. The essays of *In the American Grain* present Williams' view of the development of the American imagination, from Red Eric to Abraham Lincoln. As Louis Martz has observed, the chapters on "Cotton Mather's Wonders" and "Père Sebastian Rasles," which stand side by side at the center of the book, establish the work's basic themes.[27] The Puritan is the type of the man who lacks "touch," who imposes a foreign imagination upon the wilderness, while Rasles is the type of the questing man who glories in "the animate touch," who finds his "wonders" in the actual experience of the New World.

> All that will be new in America will be anti-Puritan [says Williams in his essay on Rasles]. It will be of another root. It will be more from the heart of Rasles, in the north. . . .
>
> Contrary to the English, Rasles recognized the New World. It stands out in all he says. It is a living flame compared to their dead ash.[28]

The chapter on Rasles opens with a rollcall of the expatriate artists whom Williams met during his 1924 trip to Paris; then it moves to a consideration of Rasles by way of a discussion between Williams and Valery Larbaud on the nature of American experience. In Williams' eyes, the Parisian exiles are the "modern version of the

Puritans." "They are those who have felt themselves living in a 'squallid, horrid American Desart'; they have refused, like Cotton Mather, to embrace the wilderness." [29] Over against them we have the possibility of an American artist who can recapture Rasles' "animate touch."

The penultimate essay in the book, on Edgar Allan Poe, provides a comprehensive summary of Williams' attitudes. In contrast to those who (like T. S. Eliot) see Poe through the eyes of his French admirers, Williams stresses Poe's position "as a genius intimately shaped by his locality and time." [30] Like Philip Freneau, who attacked the slavish imitation of imported literary models, Poe resisted the colonial tradition (imposition of alien forms) and the New England tradition (American academicism in the service of English literature). Williams celebrates Poe's "provincialism"; he was "a new De Soto," [31] to whom the New World called as a woman to her lover. The French have copied the "surface of his genius . . . without sensing the actuality, of which that is the complement." [32] The sign of Poe's local vigor is his concern with new uses of language. Williams views Poe's discontent with traditional meters and his interest in quantitative measure (expressed in "The Rationale of Verse") as the inevitable issue of his desire to measure "local" experience.

The fictional counterpart to *In the American Grain* is Williams' novel *A Voyage to Pagany* (1928), written out of his experiences during the two European visits of the 1920's. Dr. Evans, physician and writer, sails for France in 1924, following the path of the expatriate writers who have already made Paris the center of American literary activity. The novel explores Dr. Evans' emotional and intellectual responses to "Pagany," to "the Ancient Springs of Purity and Plenty," and ends when he returns to America with a new appreciation of his identity as an American. In contrast to Williams' public blasts against Eliot and his followers, in contrast even to the Rasles chapter of *In the American Grain, A*

Voyage to Pagany does justice to both the threat and the appeal of Europe. It suggests that Williams' violent reaction to Eliot may have been a reaction against the part of his own talent that was drawn toward Eliot's cosmopolitan standards. But the last chapter of *A Voyage to Pagany,* "Off to the New World," reaffirms Williams' early intuition that the source of his art would have to be the local and the particular.

The tensions evident in the Prologue to *Kora in Hell, A Voyage to Pagany,* and *In the American Grain* also mark the verse of this period. The title of the 1921 collection, *Sour Grapes,* reflects Williams' sense of frustration. Once again, the program piece establishes the tone:

THE LATE SINGER

Here it is spring again
and I still a young man!
I am late at my singing.
The sparrow with the black rain on his breast
has been at his cadenzas for two weeks past:
What is it that is dragging at my heart?
The grass by the back door
is stiff with sap.
The old maples are opening
their branches of brown and yellow moth-flowers.
A moon hangs in the blue
in the early afternoons over the marshes.
I am late at my singing. *

But the significant fact is that Williams was able to make something out of his bitter sense of lateness, his sense of a lost springtime. As he said of *Sour Grapes* many years later:

I felt rejected by the world. But secretly I had my own idea. Sour grapes are just as beautiful as any other grapes. The shape, round, perfect, beautiful. I knew it—*my* sour grape—to be just as typical of beauty as *any* grape, sweet or sour.[33]

The best poems in *Sour Grapes,* such as "Queen Anne's Lace" and "Portrait of the Author," carry forward the

* *Collected Earlier Poems* (Norfolk, Conn., 1951), 187.

achievement of *Al Que Quiere!* But in his next volume, *Spring and All* (1923), Williams returned in part to the methods of *Kora in Hell,* alternating the poems with prose passages which employ all the tricks of Dada and surrealism (typographical effects, the introduction of *trouvailles* from popular culture). The prose passages emphasize the intent of the poems: to claim all subjects as essentially poetic, to banish all emotions except those that inhere in the object itself. Later, when *Spring and All* was incorporated into the *Collected Poems,* Williams freed the poems from the surrounding apparatus, and allowed them to speak with their own voice of renewed confidence. The famous opening poem, "Spring and All" (which begins "By the road to the contagious hospital"), describes the annual birth of a new world. Here are the last two stanzas:

> Now the grass, tomorrow
> the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf
> One by one objects are defined—
> It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf
>
> But now the stark dignity of
> entrance—Still, the profound change
> has come upon them: rooted, they
> grip down and begin to awaken *

Perhaps the best-known poem of the volume is "The Red Wheelbarrow":

> so much depends
> upon
>
> a red wheel
> barrow
>
> glazed with rain
> water
>
> beside the white
> chickens †

* *Collected Earlier Poems* (Norfolk, Conn., 1951), 241-242.
† *Collected Earlier Poems* (Norfolk, Conn., 1951), 277.

It has often been said that the first line "lifts" this poem to the level of imaginative statement, but surely it is the form of the entire poem—especially the form on the page—which defines the object. The visual and musical patterns enable us to see the image as Williams saw it, glistening with meaning. The burden of *Spring and All* is the world reborn, made new through a new angle of vision.

The original arrangement of *Spring and All* raises the question of why Williams experimented with Dadaism and surrealism during the 1920's. The answer, I think, may be found in *A Novelette and Other Prose, 1921-1931,* in the chapter entitled "Fierce Singleness," where Williams lists a number of facts (e.g., "A stone is darker when wet than when dry") and then comments:

> When these things were first noted categories were ready for them so that they got fast in corners of understanding. By this process, reinforced by tradition, every common thing has been nailed down, stripped of freedom of action and taken away from use.[34]

It would seem that in Dadaism and surrealism Williams found congenial devices for breaking down these "categories," for creating an original chaos in which things "have a relationship with each other simply because they are actual." [35] In 1927 he even tried automatic writing, the result being the verses called "The Descent of Winter." [36] But even this experiment could not liberate Williams from the inherited categories: the poem from "Descent of Winter" called "10/22" [October 22nd], which begins with the relationship of "actual things," suddenly turns into an unconscious imitation of Shakespeare's Sonnet LXXIII ("That time of year thou mayst in me behold/When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang . . .").

> and a white birch
> with yellow leaves

and few
and loosely hung *

In his passion for invention Williams often forgot that the works of the past can be "actual things" as well as imprisoning forms.

The publication in 1934 of *Collected Poems 1921-1931* should have been an occasion for calm stock-taking and critical assessment: most poets at the age of fifty, if their major achievement is not behind them, have at least indicated their major lines of development. But the reader of *Collected Poems* must have found it difficult to generalize upon the past, much less to predict the future. Wallace Stevens is laboring under this difficulty in his elegant Preface, where he is reduced to vague terms ("romanticism" and "the anti-poetic") in his attempt to "define Williams and his poetry." In the early 1930's one could say with certainty that Williams had settled upon his native ground as the source of his art, and was determined to seek its meaning through concrete particulars: "No ideas but in things.† The youthful faith in unprocessed sensations, "imitation of the senseless /unarrangement of wild things," ‡ had given way to a new insistence upon visual order and the patterns of the American idiom. But Williams was still the pragmatist, still open—perhaps we should say exposed—to new experience, and the poetry of the 1930's exhibits fresh departures in subject and method. Williams' experiences as the doctor to "Guinea Hill," Rutherford's working-class district, brought him into direct contact with the worst effects of the Great Depression, and *An Early Martyr* (1935) is faithful to the times. Some of the poems in *An Early Martyr* are openly propagandistic (see the title poem and "A Portrait of the Times"); others "lift" the miseries Williams encountered to a more

* *Collected Earlier Poems* (Norfolk, Conn., 1951), 301.
† *Collected Earlier Poems* (Norfolk, Conn., 1951), 233.
‡ *Collected Earlier Poems* (Norfolk, Conn., 1951), 330.

general level. Among the latter poems is "The Yachts," whose closing lines demand quotation.

> Arms with hands grasping seek to clutch at the prows.
> Bodies thrown recklessly in the way are cut aside.
> It is a sea of faces about them in agony, in despair
>
> until the horror of the race dawns staggering the mind,
> the whole sea become an entanglement of watery bodies
> lost to the world bearing what they cannot hold. Broken,
>
> beaten, desolate, reaching from the dead to be taken up
> they cry out, failing, failing! their cries rising
> in waves still as the skillful yachts pass over.*

Even when Williams is intent upon delineating "the object" in painterly fashion, we feel the pressure of the times.

PROLETARIAN PORTRAIT

A big young bareheaded woman
in an apron

Her hair slicked back standing
on the street

One stockinged foot toeing
the sidewalk

Her shoe in her hand. Looking
intently into it

She pulls out the paper insole
to find the nail

That has been hurting her †

This same concern with the local human predicament may be found in the short stories which make up *The Knife of the Times* (1932) and *Life along the Passaic River* (1938), where Williams' prose may best be de-

* *Collected Earlier Poems* (Norfolk, Conn., 1951), 107.
† *Collected Earlier Poems* (Norfolk, Conn., 1951), 101.

scribed—to borrow a term from Vivienne Koch—as behavioristic. Few poets since Villon have written of poverty and suffering with such directness and sincerity.

Many of Williams' poems of the 1930's, such as "Proletarian Portrait," are technically akin to the short poems of the 1920's and can be distinguished only by their darker subjects. But other works, notably "The Crimson Cyclamen" and "An Elegy for D. H. Lawrence," reveal a new interest in the longer poetic form. Of all modern poets, Williams would seem at first thought to be least qualified for work on a long architectural poem. His emphasis on the moment of sensation, the timeless image, hardly makes for continuity in structure. Of course, the problems Williams encountered in his approach to the longer form were variations of those faced by other modern poets, such as Eliot and Pound, in their attempts to reconcile a lyric talent with the architectural requirements of the long poem. But since Williams' insistence upon spontaneity and the local subject cut him off from the resources of myth and literary allusion upon which Eliot and Pound drew so heavily, his difficulty was much greater. He had to provide his own controlling myths. In poems of moderate length Williams sustains a single mood, and achieves a unified effect, by a skillful development of central images: spring and the serpent dominate the "Elegy for D. H. Lawrence," while the cyclamen itself controls the elegy for Charles Demuth. But already in these poems (as in "The Flower" and "Adam" and "Eve") Williams was approaching the limits of sustained lyricism, and in *Paterson* he was squarely confronted with the problem of integrating a number of lyric passages into some larger structure, of bridging the gap between lyric talent and epic intent. Since the planning and writing of *Paterson* occupied most of the last half of Williams' career, we may take its five Books as a record of his artistic development in the 1940's and 1950's. This strategy does not imply a low evaluation of the verse in *Collected Later Poems* and *Pictures from Brueghel;* these volumes contain many of Williams'

finest poems. But from a technical viewpoint the shorter poems of the 1940's and 1950's can be best understood in relation to Williams' continuing work on *Paterson*.

In his early poem "The Wanderer" Williams' muse first poses the question, "How shall I be a mirror to this modernity?" and then—as if in answer—commands the poet to merge with the "Passaic, that filthy river," which flows through Paterson to the sea:

> "Enter, youth, into this bulk!
> Enter, river, into this young man!"
> Then the river began to enter my heart,
> Eddying back cool and limpid
> Into the crystal beginning of its days.
> But with the rebound it leaped forward:
> Muddy, then black and shrunken
> Till I felt the utter depth of its rottenness
> The vile breadth of its degradation
> And dropped down knowing this was me now.
> But she lifted me and the water took a new tide
> Again into the older experiences,
> And so, backward and forward,
> It tortured itself within me
> Until time had been washed finally under,
> And the river had found its level
> And its last motion had ceased
> And I knew all—it became me.*

Even in this youthful poem the Passaic is the flow of experience and language which must be accepted and understood. Obviously the form of "The Wanderer" was unequal to the task it set, but Williams never lost sight of his epic intention, and by the middle of the 1920's he was planning a long work to be called *Paterson*. The poems "Paterson" (1927) and "Paterson: Episode 17" (1937) testify to his preoccupation with the subject. Gradually a plan evolved which centered around the identification of a man (Everyman and Dr. Williams) with the "psychologic-social panorama of a city." [37] Here

* *Collected Earlier Poems* (Norfolk, Conn., 1951), 11-12.

is Williams' statement of the ground-plan for *Paterson,* made after Book Four had been completed:

> The thing was to use the multiple facets which a city presented as representatives for comparable facets of contemporary thought, thus to be able to objectify the man himself as we know him and love him and hate him.
>
> The city I wanted as my object had to be one that I knew in its most intimate details. New York was too big, too much a congeries of the entire world's facets. I wanted something nearer home, something knowable. I deliberately selected Paterson as my reality. My own suburb [Rutherford] was not distinguished or varied enough for my purpose. There were other possibilities but Paterson topped them.
>
> Paterson has a definite history associated with the beginnings of the United States. It has besides a central feature, the Passaic Falls, which as I began to think about it became more and more the lucky burden of what I wanted to say. I began to read all I could about the history of the Falls, the park on the little hill beyond it and the early inhabitants.
>
> There were a hundred modifications of this general plan as, following the theme rather than the river itself, I allowed myself to be drawn on. The noise of the Falls seemed to me to be a language which we were and are seeking, and my search, as I looked about, became the struggle to interpret and use this language. This is the substance of the poem. But the poem is also the search of the poet after his language, his own language which I, quite apart from the material theme, had to use to write at all. I had to write in a certain way to gain a verisimilitude with the object I had in mind.[38]

In his research for *Paterson* Williams read widely in local history, and incorporated into the poem prose passages from his source-books.[39] Since he was determined to avoid "some neo-classic *recognizable* context," [40] the poem had to supply the reader with its own raw materials; the prose passages of history and personal experience provide the specifics which are "lifted" into general significance by the lyric passages. But we must not think of *Paterson* as having any single line of development; instead the poem exists in space, like a city, and can

be explored by a number of different routes. Williams suggests some of these routes in the equivalents for *Paterson* which precede Book One:

:a local pride; spring, summer, fall and the sea; a confession; a basket; a column; a reply to Greek and Latin with the bare hands; a gathering up; a celebration;

in distinctive terms; by multiplication a reduction to one; daring; a fall; the clouds resolved into a sandy sluice; an enforced pause;

hard put to it; an identification and a plan for action to supplant a plan for action; a taking up of slack; a dispersal and a metamorphosis.

Each of these phrases suggests a possible approach to the poem. *Paterson* can be viewed as an embodiment of the earth's natural rhythms *("spring, summer, fall and the sea");* as a local reply to the cosmopolitan epics of Pound and Eliot *("a reply to Greek and Latin with the bare hands");* as an attempt to convey the general through an accumulation of particulars *("by multiplication a reduction to one").* In this limited essay I can only indicate Williams' subject and method by a brief summary of the poem's progress, and then discuss one major theme, the search for a redeeming language.

The first four books of *Paterson* were originally conceived as the entire poem.[41] Book One, "The Delineaments of the Giants," introduces Paterson the man and Paterson the city.

> Paterson lies in the valley under the Passaic Falls
> its spent waters forming the outline of his back. He
> lies on his right side, head near the thunder
> of the waters filling his dreams! Eternally asleep,
> his dreams walk about the city where he persists
> incognito. . . .*

Facing the giant is the low mountain, a public park, his female complement. We are immediately reminded of

* *Paterson* (New York, 1963), 14.

Joyce's *Finnegans Wake,* where the hero and heroine become active parts of the landscape.[42] But whereas Joyce's archetypal figures contain all history as well as the particular experiences of Dublin, Williams is determined to define his world in terms of the local scene. Book One explores "the elemental character of the place," [43] reaching back into the history of Paterson. The central historical episode is Sam Patch's plunge to his death at the Genesee Falls (in Rochester, New York) on November 13, 1826; Patch had first gained fame by his successful dive at the Passaic Falls, but at the alien Genesee Falls "speech had failed him." The plunge into the river is equated with the poet's plunge into the past: will speech fail him? Is a common language possible?

> (What common language to unravel?
> . . combed into straight lines
> from that rafter of a rock's
> lip.) *

The river is the flow of personal consciousness and of group consciousness: Will its waters be blocked? And if not, can the roar of the falls be interpreted?

Book Two, "Sunday in the Park," introduces the "modern replicas" [44] of Paterson's history. Mr. Paterson walks among the crowds, observing with the poet's eye, brooding on the themes of "divorce" and "blockage." The Passaic has been dammed by modern industrialism, its energy diverted, and this "blockage" is mirrored in the failure of the evangelist's language, in the poet's separation from his hysterical correspondent, in every modern failure of communication. Can the poet heal this divorce with his "invention"?

Bewildered by the multiplicity of the present, deafened by "the roar of the falls," the poet in Book Three enters "The Library," hoping to find the sources of language there, but "still the roar in his mind is/unabated." The "Beautiful Thing" lies not in the past,

* *Paterson* (New York, 1963), 15.

but in the particulars of the present. Book Three celebrates the catastrophes which struck Paterson in 1902—fire, flood, and tornado. The fire which destroyed the old library is transformed into an emblem of creativity:

> An old bottle, mauled by the fire
> gets a new glaze, the glass warped
> to a new distinction, reclaiming the
> undefined. A hot stone, reached
> by the tide, crackled over by fine
> lines, the glaze unspoiled . *

Book Four, "The Run to the Sea," opens with a mock-pastoral which recapitulates the failures of love: traditional values and the forms that express them break down as the river approaches the sea. But out of dissolution come the new values and new forms. The central image in Book Four is Madame Curie's discovery of radium.

> a stain at the bottom of the retort
> without weight, a failure, a
> nothing. And then, returning in the
> night, to find it .
>
> LUMINOUS!
>
> . . . . . .
> 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 .†

The proper gloss here is a paragraph from Williams' late essay on "The American Idiom."

> Whitman lived in the nineteenth century but he, it must be acknowledged, proceeded instinctively by rule of thumb

* *Paterson* (New York, 1963), 142-143.
† *Paterson* (New York, 1963), 209.

and a tough head, correctly, in the construction of his verses. He knew nothing of the importance of what he had stumbled on, unconscious of the concept of the variable foot. This new notion of time which we were approaching, leading to the work of Curie and the atom bomb, and other *new* concepts have been pregnant with far-reaching consequences.[45]

New concepts demand new forms. At the end of Book Four "the man rises from the sea where the river appears to have lost its identity and . . . turns inland toward Camden where Walt Whitman, much traduced, lived the latter years of his life and died." [46]

Even this inadequate survey of the first four books of *Paterson* should indicate that the poem has little to do with our traditional concepts of narrative unity. In his desire to create a work where "order is what is discovered after the fact," [47] Williams rejected all frames of reference except his own sensibility. Therefore it is not surprising that, after a lapse of seven years (Book Four was published in 1951), he should have added a fifth book to *Paterson,* and that at his death he was working on a sixth. Like Pound's *Cantos,* that record of personal struggle, *Paterson* could have no formal end. Writing to his publisher about Book Five, Williams said:

[since completing *Paterson, Four*] I have come to understand not only that many changes have occurred in me and the world, but I have been forced to recognize that there can be no end to such a story I have envisioned with the terms which I had laid down for myself. I had to take the world of Paterson into a new dimension if I wanted to give it imaginative validity. Yet I wanted to keep it whole, as it is to me.[48]

Book Five contrasts sharply with the preceding books in subject and tone, although many of the themes are familiar. The roar of the falls has given way to an absolute stillness, and in old age the poet looks down in contemplation on Paterson from the heights of the New York Cloisters, where the late fifteenth-century tapestries which portray the hunting of the unicorn form

a permanent reality. Book Five is dedicated "To the Memory of Henri Toulouse Lautrec," but in a larger sense it is dedicated to all artists who have brought "measure" out of experience.

A WORLD OF ART
THAT THROUGH THE YEARS HAS
SURVIVED! *

In *Paterson, Book Five* Williams faces the problem of communication with new confidence: secure in his own "measure," he contemplates the Beautiful Things of the past. The unicorn tapestries, with their "peculiar combination of the local and mythical," strike the poet as a confirmation of his own aims.[49] The prose passages, in contrast to those of the earlier books, are made up of personal communications from men and women with whom Williams has made contact. Perhaps the center of Book Five is the notion of the word "newborn." The unicorn, traditional emblem of the Incarnation, is captured by the colored threads of art. In the sterile library of Book Three the poet had thought of

> A tapestry hound
> with his thread teeth drawing crimson from
> the throat of the unicorn

but in Book Five the resurrected unicorn

> is penned by a low
> wooden fence
> in April! †

surrounded by flowers. Similarly, a painting by Brueghel captures the poet's eye:

> Peter Brueghel, the elder, painted
> a Nativity, painted a Baby
> new born!
> among the words.‡

* *Paterson* (New York, 1963), 244.
† *Paterson* (New York, 1963), 152, 270.
‡ *Paterson* (New York, 1963), 263.

But the poet's eye is also that of the physician:

> —it is a scene, authentic
> enough, to be witnessed frequently
> among the poor (I salute
> the man Brueghel who painted
> what he saw— *

In the bustling Nativity scene are those who worship the mother as a Virgin, and those who regard her as a Whore (the two guises of woman are identified with each other in Book Five), but the artist comprehends both viewpoints:

> Peter Brueghel the artist saw it
> from the two sides: the
> imagination must be served—
> and he served
> dispassionately †

Book Five celebrates those who have taken the "measure" of life, who have found a form of expression: "to measure is all we know." The serene tone reflects Williams' confidence in his own language, his belief that —like Whitman—he has released new energy by liberating the American idiom. Ultimately, our estimate of Williams' success or failure—not only in *Paterson, Book Five,* but throughout his artistic career—must depend on our estimate of his metrical achievements.

After his early rejection of the formlessness of *vers libre* Williams dedicated himself to the search for a poetic "measure" which would not violate the spoken language of Americans. As he said in 1939:

> Verse is measure, there is no free verse. *But* the measure must be one of more trust, greater liberty, than has been permitted in the past. It must be an open formation.[50]

It was Williams' conviction that the traditional metrical units, even if flexibly employed, could not allow for the

* *Paterson* (New York, 1963), 264.
† *Paterson* (New York, 1963), 265.

variations in pronunciation and inflection of the American idiom. Book One of *Paterson* closes with a passage from Symonds' *Studies of the Greek Poets* concerning the sixth-century poet Hipponax, who broke with tradition in order to "bring the meter still more within the sphere of prose and common speech," and it is obvious that Williams thought of himself as a modern Hipponax. What he sought was a verse form which would allow for a wide variation in individual performance while still asserting some musical regularity. He believed that he had achieved this form in his early work on *Paterson,*[51] and in 1954 he tried to explain his concept of "measure" to his fellow poet Richard Eberhart:

> By measure I mean musical pace. Now, with music in our ears the words need only be taught to keep as distinguished an order, as chosen a character, as regular, according to the music, as in the best of prose.
>
> By its *music* shall the best of modern verse be known and the *resources* of the music. The refinement of the poem, its subtlety, is not to be known by the elevation of the words but—the words don't so much matter—by the resources of the *music.*

This general passage, with its echoes of Pound and Imagism, is followed by an example from Williams' own work.

> (count): not that I ever count when writing but, at best, the lines must be capable of being counted, that is to say, *measured*—(believe it or not).—At that I may, half consciously, even count the measure under my breath as I write.—
> (approximate example)
> (1) The smell of the heat is boxwood
> (2) when rousing us
> (3) a movement of the air
> (4) stirs our thoughts
> (5) that had no life in them
> (6) to a life, a life in which
> . . . . . .

> Count a single beat to each numeral. You may not agree with my ear, but that is the way I count the line. Over the whole poem it gives a pattern to the meter that can be felt as a new measure. It gives resources to the ear which result in a language which we hear spoken about us every day.[52]

This is the so-called variable foot, and Williams' descriptions of it are not always consistent or perfectly clear. Sometimes he introduces the analogy of Einstein's theory, where all is relative except the constant "beat" of time.

What Williams appears to have had in mind, at least in theory, was a return to quantitative measure, each line marked off by typography or natural breath pauses having the same time value. But in practice the best of his late verse would seem to depend on a loose pattern of stresses which allows the unstressed syllables to run with relative freedom. Thus his "measure" is not radically different from that employed by Pound and Eliot in many of their works. What does distinguish Williams' practice is his application of the "measure" to American speech. The verse of his last decade—of *Paterson, Book Five* and the poems collected as *Pictures from Brueghel*—is the most controlled of his entire career, and its influence on future American poetry may exceed that of the late work of Pound and Eliot. If this should prove true, then Williams will have been vindicated in the area where he exercised most love and care.

Inevitably the "variable foot" places great emphasis upon the visual appearance of a poem, how it looks on the page, since the quantity or "beat" can be indicated by line breaks and typography. Williams used the typewriter in composing, and he was extraordinarily successful in putting the Dada and surrealist experiments with typography to serious use. This stress upon visual effects, and their relationship to the melody, reminds us that Williams was a "painterly" poet. Early in his life he had a strong desire to be a painter, and throughout his career he received as much inspiration from contemporary painting as he did from contemporary verse. The use of pictorial effects in *Paterson, Book Five* is merely the culmination of this interest, and I shall try—in con-

cluding this essay—to construct an "image" of Williams' artistic development out of his responses to the visual arts.[53].

The famous Armory Show of 1913 seems to have provided Williams with a sanction for his first revolts against traditional form. In "Painters and Parties," the chapter of his *Autobiography* which deals with this early period, Williams recalls how he "laughed out loud . . . happily, with relief" when he first saw Marcel Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase." [54] The revolutionary visual effects confirmed his deepest intuitions.

> There had been a break somewhere, we were streaming through, each thinking his own thoughts, driving his own designs toward his self's objectives. Whether the Armory Show in painting did it or whether that also was no more than a facet—the poetic line, the way the image was to lie on the page was our immediate concern.[55]

This same revitalizing process was repeated in the 1920's, with Williams' interest in Dadaism and surrealism: throughout his career Williams looked to the *avant-garde* of the visual arts for direction and confirmation.

But the visual arts did more than support the "anti-poetic" strain in Williams' work. Although modern French painting had established, in Williams' words, "an atmosphere of release, color release, release from stereotyped forms, trite subjects," [56] it had also provided a positive impulse toward new forms. Ezra Pound described the poetic Image as "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time," [57] and this feeling for the poem as a spatial rather than a temporal composition—something to be seen on the page —was intensified in Williams by the new constructions of post-Impressionist art. Williams believed that the poem can, like a "still life," transform narrative action into a spatial design which vibrates with potential energy. The short poem "Still Lifes," published after his death, helps us to understand Williams' preoccupation with visual forms.

All poems can be represented by
still lifes not to say
water-colors, the violence of
the Iliad lends itself to an arrangement
of narcissi in a jar,

The slaughter of Hector by Achilles
can well be shown by them
casually assembled yellow upon white
radiantly making a circle
sword strokes violently given
in more or less haphazard disarray [58]

Obviously modern painting revealed more to Williams than new possibilities in subject matter and structural arrangement: it suggested a new attitude toward the artist's medium. In his *Autobiography* Williams tells of a conversation between his friend Alanson Hartpence, who worked for a New York gallery, and a woman who was examining a picture.

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." [59]

To Williams this anecdote summed up the difference between art conceived as a representation of nature and art conceived as a natural creation in itself, between art as reflection and art as invention. His remarks on this distinction are strongly reminiscent of Coleridge, involving as they do an interpretation of Aristotle's *mimesis,* but to Williams the distinction had been demonstrated by Cézanne and his successors. The term used by Williams and his friends in the late 1920's and early 1930's to describe this new attitude toward the imitative process was "objectivism": they wished to treat the poem as a solid object, made of words just as a painting is made

of paint and canvas. They saw the poem as a self-sufficient creation, related to nature but not a reflection of some known reality. At this time Juan Gris was Williams' favorite painter, and he wished to make his poems have "actual value—as grapes in a painting by Juan Gris." [60]

I think it is fair to say that during the first half of Williams' career the visual arts influenced his work mainly in the area of technique, although obviously any technical decision affects the totality of the poem. But with the brutal impact of the Depression years, and Williams' movement toward more formal design, a greater variety of paintings entered his field of action. His interest began to range beyond the modern innovators, and to encompass more than technical achievements. Significantly, the painter of his last years was not Cézanne or Gris, but Brueghel. In *The Wedge* (1944) we find a poem which attempts to reproduce the lively movement of "Brueghel's great picture, The Kermess," [61] and during the final decade of his career Williams wrote ten exercises in his new "measure" which take as their subjects ten paintings by Brueghel.[62] Perhaps done as an accompaniment to the treatment of Brueghel's "Nativity" in *Paterson, Book Five,* these exercises are extraordinarily successful recreations of Brueghel's visual effects. If we compare one of them, "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus," with W. H. Auden's great poem on the same theme, "Musée des Beaux Arts," Williams' intent becomes immediately clear. Auden's poem is a "literary" comment (in the best sense of this term) on the significance of Brueghel's painting; Williams' exercise is an attempt to re-create in the rhythms of language the picture's visual rhythms. With its passionate interest in quotidian life, and feeling for the great cycles of nature which enclose local events, Brueghel's painting is the perfect visual complement to the best of Williams' late poetry. Williams' early attempts to emulate the effects of post-Impressionist art are often strained and artificial, but in some of his last poems the painter's visual imagination and the poet's auditory imagination seem almost

identical. In his *Autobiography* Williams describes an incident from his 1910 visit to Spain in this fashion:

At Toledo—caught, as it were, in the coils of the narrow river deep in the gorge at its feet—lonely as I was, I had the one impression of primitive Spain that is most engraved upon my remembrance. I had gone out to look around when I came to the narrow bridge that connects the citadel, which the place really is, with the outside world.

It is an extremely narrow, old stone bridge that might easily have been constructed by the Romans. No sooner did I get out on it and begin to cross when a big, ragged man, accompanied by two lean-bellied dogs that reached nearly to my shoulders, slouched by followed by a few sheep. Then before I knew it, the old bridge was packed solid with sheep baaing and shoving one another past me, hundreds of them from parapet to parapet. It could have been any moment in the past two thousand years as I stood smelling and feeling the animals flood past me among the rocks on all sides. Then they passed, followed by another ragged shepherd and his hang-headed dog, as large as the others, pacing along behind them.[63]

This visual impression, secreted in Williams' mind for fifty years, finally emerged in his late poem "The High Bridge above the Tagus River at Toledo," where it has been transformed into another picture from Brueghel:

A young man, alone, on the high bridge over the Tagus which
was too narrow to allow the sheep driven by the lean,
enormous dogs whose hind legs worked slowly on cogs
to pass easily . . .
(he didn't speak the language)

Pressed against the parapet either side by the crowding sheep,
the relentless pressure of the dogs communicated
itself to him also
above the waters in the gorge below.

They were hounds to him rather than sheep dogs because of
their size and savage appearance, dog tired from the day's
work.
The stiff jerking movement of the hind legs, the hanging

heads at the shepherd's heels, slowly followed the excited and crowding sheep.

The whole flock, the shepherd and the dogs, were covered with dust as if they had been all day long on the road. The pace of the sheep, slow in the mass,
governed the man and the dogs. They were approaching the city at nightfall, the long journey completed.

In old age they walk in the old man's dreams and still walk in his dreams, peacefully continuing in his verse forever.[64]

Notes

1. For the details of Williams' life see the chronology at the end of this essay.

2. Edith Heal (ed.), *I Wanted to Write a Poem* (Boston, 1958), 2.

3. Edith Heal (ed.), *I Wanted to Write a Poem* (Boston, 1958), 16.

4. *Massachusetts Review,* III (Winter, 1962), 296. At other times Williams expressed the notion more elegantly: "We live only in one place at a time but far from being bound by it, only through it do we realize our freedom," in "The Fatal Blunder," *Quarterly Review of Literature,* II (1944), 126.

5. *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1951), 357, 361, 362.

6. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York, 1934), 240. For an illuminating discussion of Williams' affinities with Dewey, see Vivienne Koch, *William Carlos Williams* (Norfolk, Conn., 1950), 261-266.

7. My information on Williams' early work is drawn mainly from *I Wanted to Write a Poem* and the *Autobiography*

8. *Massachusetts Review,* III (Winter, 1962), facing page 306.

9. *Collected Earlier Poems* (Norfolk, Conn., 1951), 16. The reader should be warned that the arrangement of Williams' collected volumes is not always chronological. Ezra Pound's selection of "Postlude" as one of the "few beautiful poems that still ring in my head" occurs in "A Retrospect," T. S. Eliot (ed.), *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (London, 1954), 14.

10. Edith Heal (ed.), *I Wanted to Write a Poem* (Boston, 1958), 18.

11. For the complex history of the Imagist movement see Stanley K. Coffman, Jr., *Imagism* (Norman, Okla., 1951).

12. Quoted in Vivienne Koch, *William Carlos Williams* (Norfolk, Conn., 1950), 13.

13. This summary is based mainly upon Pound's letters and essays.

14. *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1954), 212-213.

15. Edith Heal (ed.), *I Wanted to Write a Poem* (Boston, 1958), 26.

16. From the "Prologue" to *Kora in Hell,* reprinted in *The Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1954), 11. The *Improvisations* themselves have been reprinted by City Lights Books (San Francisco, 1957), with a new preface by the author.

17. See the new preface to the City Lights edition; and *I Wanted to Write a Poem,* 27.

18. William Carlos Williams, *Kora in Hell: Improvisations,* City Lights edition (San Francisco, 1957), 40-41.

19. René Taupin, *L'influence du symbolisme française sur la poésie américaine* (Paris, 1929), 281-284.

20. John C. Thirlwall (ed.), *The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1957), 30-33.

21. "Prologue," *Kora in Hell,* reprinted in *The Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1954), 21.

22. "Prologue," 24. For Pound's counterstatement to *Kora in Hell* see D. D. Paige (ed.), *Letters of Ezra Pound* (London, 1951), 220-226. Pound's three letters to Williams should be read in tandem with the Prologue.

23. *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1951), 146.

24. *Paterson* (New York, 1963), 44.

25. "An Essay on *Leaves of Grass,*" in Milton Hindus (ed.), *"Leaves of Grass" One Hundred Years After* (Stanford, 1955), 24.

26. "An Essay on *Leaves of Grass,*" in Milton Hindus (ed.), *"Leaves of Grass" One Hundred Years After* (Stanford, 1955), 27.

27. Louis Martz, "The Unicorn in Paterson," *Thought,* XXXV (Winter, 1960), 545-548. The present paragraph follows Mr. Martz' argument.

28. *In the American Grain* (Norfolk, Conn., n.d.), 120.

29. Louis Martz, "The Unicorn in Paterson," *Thought,* XXXV (Winter, 1960), 547.

30. *In the American Grain* (Norfolk, Conn., n.d.), 216.

31. *In the American Grain* (Norfolk, Conn., n.d.), 220.

32. *In the American Grain* (Norfolk, Conn., n.d.), 222.

33. Edith Heal (ed.), *I Wanted to Write a Poem* (Boston, 1958), 33.

34. *A Novelette and Other Prose, 1921-1931* (Toulon, 1932), 40.

35. *A Novelette and Other Prose, 1921-1931* (Toulon, 1932), 41.

36. See John C. Thirlwall, "Two Cities: Paris and Paterson," *Massachusetts Review,* III (Winter, 1962), 288.

37. John C. Thirlwall (ed.), *The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1957), 216.

38. From a publisher's release of 1951, quoted in John C. Thirlwall, "William Carlos Williams' *Paterson,*" *New Directions 17* (New York, 1961), 263.

39. For the local background of *Paterson* see George Zabriskie, "The Geography of *Paterson,*" *Perspective,* VI (Autumn-Winter, 1953), 201-216. Two of Williams' source-books were John Warner Barber and Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of the State of New Jersey* (New York, 1846), and William Nelson, *History of the City of Paterson and the County of Passaic* (Paterson, 1901).

40. John C. Thirlwall (ed.), *The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1957), 239.

41. For some detailed accounts of the structure of *Paterson,* see the Bibliographical Note below.

42. Williams admired Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (see his "A Note on the Recent Work of James Joyce," reprinted in *Selected Essays*), and he obviously read (or heard Joyce read) the "Anna Livia Plurabelle" section of *Finnegans Wake.* In *I Wanted to Write a Poem,* 65, the phrase "the he and the she of it" echoes *Finnegans Wake,* 213.12.

43. From the "Author's Note" which introduces *Paterson.*

44. "Author's Note."

45. *New Directions 17* (New York, 1961), 251.

46. *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1951), 392.

47. John C. Thirlwall (ed.), *The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1957), 214.

48. From the "Author's Note" to *Paterson* (New York, 1963).
49. Louis Martz, "The Unicorn in Paterson," *Thought,* XXXV (Winter, 1960), 539. Martz' excellent discussion of Book Five is centered upon the unicorn tapestries.
50. From "Against the Weather," in *The Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1954), 212.
51. Specifically, in that passage on page 96 beginning "The descent beckons . . ."
52. John C. Thirlwall (ed.), *The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1957), 326-327.
53. John Malcolm Brinnin's pamphlet, "William Carlos Williams" (Minneapolis, 1963), is excellent on this subject, especially pages 17-23.
54. *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1951), 134.
55. *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1951), 138.
56. Quoted in John Malcolm Brinnin, "William Carlos Williams" (Minneapolis, 1963), 14.
57. T. S. Eliot (ed.), *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (London, 1954), 4.
58. *Hudson Review,* XVI (Winter, 1963-1964), 516.
59. *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1951), 240. The implications of the anecdote are discussed on pages 240-241.
60. See *A Novelette and Other Prose, 1921-1931* (Toulon, 1932), 37 and *passim.*
61. *Collected Later Poems* (rev. ed.; Norfolk, Conn., 1963), 11.
62. *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems* (Norfolk, Conn., 1962), 3-14.
63. *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1951), 123.
64. *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems* (Norfolk, Conn., 1962), 53.

Bibliographical Note

The works of William Carlos Williams present a difficult bibliographical problem. During the fifty-odd years of his literary career Williams produced over forty volumes of poetry,

fiction, translations, and critical prose, while some of the poems and reviews which appeared in the short-lived little magazines were never collected. To date there is no thorough bibliography of his works, and no extended biography. For this reason I have thought it useful to provide the reader with a chronology of Williams' life and major publications. This chronology, drawn from a number of sources, is mainly the work of Mr. Joseph W. Donohue. It is followed by a note on Williams' works that are currently available, and a checklist of important bibliographical and critical items.

CHRONOLOGY OF WILLIAMS' LIFE AND WORK

1883 Born on September 17, in Rutherford, New Jersey.

1897–1898 Attended schools in Switzerland and Paris.

1899 Entered Horace Mann School in New York City, where he followed the scientific course.

1902–1906 Passed a special examination enabling him to enroll directly in the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. Met H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) and Ezra Pound. Began writing poetry modeled on Keats.

1906 Graduated from Medical School, began internship at the French Hospital in New York City.

1907 Began another internship at the Nursery and Children's Hospital, specializing in pediatrics. Encountered administrative malpractices and resigned on principle.

1909 Returned to Rutherford. Met Florence ("Flossie") Herman, later Mrs. Williams. Sailed for Germany in mid-July to pursue professional studies at Leipzig.

Poems (privately printed in Rutherford)

1910 Left Leipzig for England in April; visited Pound in London, met William Butler Yeats; left London for Paris, then traveled in Italy and Spain. Upon his return to Rutherford Williams began private practice as a general physician and pediatrician.

1912 Married Florence Herman on December 12.

1913 Purchased house at 9 Ridge Road, Rutherford, where he lived for the remainder of his life.

The Tempers (poems published in London with the aid of Pound)

1915 Participated in *Others,* a little magazine edited by Alfred Kreymborg.

1917 *Al Que Quiere! A Book of Poems* (Williams translated the title as "To Him Who Wants It")

1920 Organized the little magazine *Contact* with Robert McAlmon. Published five issues from December, 1920, to June, 1923.

Kora in Hell: Improvisations (a series of "rhythmic prose" pieces)

1921 *Sour Grapes: A Book of Poems*

1923 *The Great American Novel* (burlesque of the novel form)

Spring and All (poems)

1924 Sailed for France in January with his wife. Renewed acquaintance with Pound, met James Joyce, and participated in the life of the American expatriates. Returned to Rutherford in June. Received the Guarantor's Award from *Poetry* magazine.

1925 *In the American Grain* (essays which explore the sources of the American imagination)

1927 Received the *Dial* award for poetry. Took his family abroad for a European tour.

1928 *A Voyage to Pagany* (a novel based on his experiences in Europe)

1929 Translated *Last Nights of Paris* by Philippe Soupault.

1930 Around this time Williams joined with Louis Zukofsky and others to launch the Ojectivist poetic theory and the Objectivist Press.

1931 Received Guarantor's Prize for poetry.

1932 The magazine *Contact* was revived; Williams co-edited three issues with Nathaniel West.

The Knife of the Times and Other Stories

A Novelette and Other Prose, 1921-1931

1934 *Collected Poems, 1921-1931*

1935 *An Early Martyr and Other Poems*

1936 *Adam & Eve & The City* (poems)

The First President (an opera libretto)

1937 *White Mule* (a novel, first part of a trilogy)

1938 *The Complete Collected Poems, 1906-1938*

Life Along the Passaic River (stories)

1940 Around this time Williams began lecturing at colleges and universities.

In the Money (novel; successor to *White Mule*)

1941 *The Broken Span* (poems)

1944 *The Wedge* (poems)

1946 Honorary LL.D. from the University of Buffalo.
Paterson, Book One (first part of the long poem Williams had been planning for some years)

1948 Received Russell Loines Memorial Award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters and honorary degrees from Rutgers University and Bard College.
The Clouds (poems)
A Dream of Love (a play)
Paterson, Book Two

1949 Made a Fellow of the Library of Congress.
The Pink Church (poems)
Selected Poems
Paterson, Book Three

1950 Received the National Book Award.
The Collected Later Poems
Make Light of It: Collected Stories

1951 Retired from practice as a physician after a cerebral hemorrhage.
The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams
The Collected Earlier Poems
Paterson, Book Four

1952 Appointed Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress; however, irresponsible political charges based on his friendship with Ezra Pound and a misreading of his poetry prevented Williams from taking up the appointment.
The Build-Up (a novel, successor to *White Mule* and *In the Money*)

1953 Won the Bollingen Award for excellence in contemporary verse.

1954 *The Desert Music and Other Poems*
Selected Essays

1955 *Journey to Love* (poems)

1956 Received a fellowship from the Academy of American Poets.
Collaborated in translating *Hypnos Waking,* by René Char.
John Marin (a book on the painter)

1957 *Sappho, A Translation*
Selected Letters

1958 Collaborated in translating *Jean Sans Terre,* by Ivan Goll.

Paterson, Book Five
1959 *Yes, Mrs. Williams: A Personal Record of My Mother*
1961 *The Farmers' Daughters: The Collected Stories*
Many Loves and Other Plays: The Collected Plays
1962 *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems* (includes *The Desert Music* and *Journey to Love*)
1963 Died on March 4. Pulitzer Prize awarded posthumously in May.

MAJOR WORKS IN PRINT

The following are available from New Directions: *Collected Earlier Poems, Collected Later Poems, Pictures from Brueghel;* these three volumes contain most of Williams' important verse except for *Paterson,* which is now available in a single paperback edition. The plays have been collected under the title *Many Loves and Other Plays.* Williams' stories have been collected in paperback as *The Farmers' Daughters.* There is also a paperback edition of his important historical work, *In the American Grain. Selected Poems* indicates the range of Williams' achievement (exclusive of *Paterson*) and has an excellent introduction by Randall Jarrell.

The early *Kora in Hell* is now available in paperback from City Lights Books, San Francisco. Williams said it was "the one book I have enjoyed referring to more than any of the others. It reveals myself to me and perhaps that is why I have kept it to myself" (*Kora in Hell* is not included in any of the collections).

Williams' *Autobiography* and *Selected Essays* are available from Random House. McDowell, Obolensky published the *Selected Letters.*

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I Wanted to Write a Poem: The Autobiography of the Works of a Poet, edited by Edith Heal (Boston, 1958), is a checklist of Williams' works based on his own collection; it contains illuminating comments by Williams on the circumstances surrounding the writing and publication of each work. Another useful checklist may be found in Allen Tate, *Sixty American Poets, 1896-1944* (rev. ed.; Washington, 1954), 143-146. Selective listings of Williams' works and of important criticism are available in Vivienne Koch, *William Carlos Wil-*

liams (Norfolk, Conn., 1950) and John Malcolm Brinnin, "William Carlos Williams" (Minneapolis, 1963).

Yale University, the University of Buffalo, and the Rutherford Public Library hold relatively complete collections of Williams' publications. The Yale and Buffalo libraries also hold important collections of letters and manuscripts.

CRITICISM

Vivienne Koch's *William Carlos Williams* (Norfolk, Conn., 1950) is an intelligent survey of the earlier poetry, plays, and prose, but many of the author's conclusions must be revised in the light of the completed *Paterson*. John Malcolm Brinnin's pamphlet, "William Carlos Williams" (Minneapolis, 1963), is a sensitive commentary, especially good on Williams' language. A book-length study of Williams' poetry, by Linda Welshimer Wagner, has been announced by Wesleyan University Press for autumn, 1964, publication.

Four critical journals have devoted special issues to Williams. *The Briarcliff Quarterly,* III (October, 1946), contains contributions by Williams and a number of critical notes, including Wallace Stevens' "Rubbings of Reality." *Perspective,* VI (Autumn-Winter, 1953) brings together a number of important essays, some of which are cited below. *The Western Review,* XVII (Summer, 1953) contains a symposium on American letters centered around Williams' *In the American Grain.* "A Gathering for William Carlos Williams" in *The Massachusetts Review,* III (Winter, 1962) includes four unpublished letters and several important critical essays.

Ezra Pound's essay on "Dr. Williams' Position," first published in 1928, is reprinted in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound,* edited by T. S. Eliot (London, 1954), 389-398. Other significant early assessments are Kenneth Burke's "The Methods of William Carlos Williams," *The Dial,* LXXXII (February, 1927), 94-98; Wallace Stevens' Preface to the 1934 *Collected Poems,* reprinted in *Opus Posthumous by Wallace Stevens* (New York, 1957), 254-257; Yvor Winters' comments on Williams' prosody in *Primitivism and Decadence* (New York, 1937); and R. P. Blackmur's notice of the 1938 *Collected Poems,* reprinted in *Language as Gesture* (New York, 1952), 347-351.

For the influence of French symbolist and surrealist poetry upon Williams, see René Taupin, *L'influence du symbolisme*

française sur la poésie américaine (Paris, 1929), and John C. Thirlwall, "Two Cities: Paris and Paterson," *Massachusetts Review,* III (Winter, 1962), 284-291.

Walter Sutton's "A Visit with William Carlos Williams," *Minnesota Review,* I (Spring, 1961), 309-324, records a number of illuminating comments by Williams on contemporary poetry and his own work.

Paterson has received more intelligent criticism than the rest of Williams' poetry. Gordon K. Grigsby's "The Genesis of *Paterson*," *College English,* XXIII (1962), 277-281, uses passages from the *Autobiography* and the *Letters* to trace the poem's gestation. Perceptive comments on Book One are Parker Tyler, "The Poet of *Paterson Book One*," *Briarcliff Quarterly,* III (October, 1946), 168-175, and Edwin Honig, "City of Man," *Poetry,* LXIX (February, 1947), 277-284. Robert Lowell's review of Book Two in *The Nation,* CLXVI (June 19, 1948), 692-694, deserves attention. Louis L. Martz explores the imagery of Book Five in "The Unicorn in Paterson," *Thought,* XXXV (Winter, 1960), 537-554, but this fine essay ranges beyond Book Five and illuminates the entire poem. Useful general studies of structure and theme in *Paterson* are Barriss Mills, "The Method of *Paterson*," *Approach,* XXXVIII (Winter, 1961), 23-26; Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, "William Carlos Williams: A Testament of Perpetual Change," PMLA, LXX (June, 1955), 292-322, reprinted in her *The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry* (New Brunswick, 1955); Walter Sutton, "Dr. Williams' *Paterson* and the Quest for Form," *Criticism,* II (Summer, 1960), 242-259; John C. Thirlwall, "William Carlos Williams' *Paterson*," *New Directions, 17* (New York, 1961), 252-310; and Frank Thompson, "The Symbolic Structure of *Paterson*," *Western Review,* XIX (Summer, 1955), 285-293. Sister Bernetta Quinn's essay is the best introduction to the poem. Ralph Nash's "The Use of Prose in *Paterson*," *Perspective,* VI (Autumn-Winter, 1953), 191-199, was highly praised by Williams (see his letter of January 20, 1954).

Wiliams' relationship to "Imagism" and his search for a new poetic "measure" have been investigated in a number of essays. The most useful are Denis Donoghue, "For a Redeeming Language," *Twentieth Century,* CLXIII (June, 1958), 532-542; Frederick J. Hoffman, "Williams and His Muse," *Poetry,* LXXXIV (April, 1954), 23-27; Frederick Morgan, "William Carlos Williams: Imagery, Rhythm, Form," *Sewanee Re-*

view, LV (Autumn, 1947), 675-690; Mary Ellen Solt, "William Carlos Williams: Idiom and Structure," *Massachusetts Review,* III (Winter, 1962), 304-318, and "William Carlos Williams: Poems in the American Idiom," *Folio,* XXV (Winter, 1960), 3-28. Mrs. Solt's essays are especially illuminating. The worksheets for Williams' "Philomena Andronico" (part of the Buffalo collection) have been discussed by Karl Shapiro in *Poets at Work,* edited by Charles D. Abbott (New York, 1948), 105-111.

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With the exception of Vivienne Koch's study, which contains substantial chapters on "The Plays" and "The Novels and Short Stories," Williams' plays and fiction have received scant attention. See the brief notes on "William Carlos Williams and the Theatre" in the *Massachusetts Review,* III (Winter, 1962), 331-344; and Mona Van Duyn's "To 'Make Light of It' as Fictional Technique," *Perspective,* VI (Autumn-Winter, 1953), 230-238.

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