WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS AND THE PASTORAL TRADITION

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of English
University of Toronto

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Pastoral is a subject that has historically enjoyed a great deal of critical attention, and there is nothing strange in the fact that this interest has continued up to the present day. Most recent attempts at addressing modern pastoral, however, have suffered from two major drawbacks: a failure to ground the definition of pastoral in any kind of a historical or critical tradition, or, more commonly, a perverse choice of works or authors for study. In particular there has been a stunning neglect with regard to one of the twentieth century’s most prolific pastoralists: William Carlos Williams.

The following thesis seeks to fill this critical gap by approaching the body of Williams’s work from the perspective of what are, in effect, various pastoral traditions. In the Introduction I locate the source of Williams’s fascination with pastoral in the divided character of his writing career and the symbols (or "facts") of his local environment. In Chapter One I discuss his relation to tradition generally, and observe how this contributes to his basically unironic approach to pastoral writing. Chapter Two looks at the relation between Williams’s pastoral and his interest in the visual arts (but avoids going over ground well-covered by critics interested in his connections to the Modernist
avant-garde). Chapter Three discusses Williams as a pastoral "regionalist". Chapter Four shows how Williams's famous line "dissonance leads to discovery", can be attributed to the discovery of a natural order underlying reality that Williams associates with pastoral. A brief Conclusion is followed by an Appendix that looks at a single poem, "The Italian Garden", in a way that will provide a summary as well as demonstrate a useful application of some of the material covered.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS FOR BOOKS BY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

A  The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams
AG  In the American Grain
BU  The Build-Up
CP1  The Collected Poems, Volume One  A. Walton Litz and Christopher MacGowan, eds.
CP2  The Collected Poems, Volume Two  Christopher MacGowan, ed.
EK  The Embodiment of Knowledge  Ron Loewinsohn, ed.
FD  The Farmers’ Daughters and Other Stories
I  Imaginations  Webster Schott, ed.
IM  In the Money
Int  Speaking Straight Ahead: Interviews with William Carlos Williams  Linda Welshimer Wagner, ed.
IWWP  I Wanted to Write a Poem: The Autobiography of the Works of a Poet reported and edited by Edith Heal
ML  Many Loves and Other Plays
P  Paterson revised edition, Christopher MacGowan, ed.
RI  A Recognizable Image: William Carlos Williams on Art and Artists  Bram Dijkstra, ed.
L  Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams  John C. Thirlwall, ed.
Let  Selected Letters [WCW and James Laughlin]  Hugh Witemeyer, ed.
SE  Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams
SS  Something to Say: William Carlos Williams on Younger Poets  James E. B. Breslin, ed.
VP  A Voyage to Pagany
WM  White Mule
Y  Yes, Mrs. Williams
INTRODUCTION

ABOVE THE FALLS

The Falls were spectacular; the river
was a symbol handed to me.

-I Wanted to Write a Poem

The myth of a Fall from a harmonious, natural setting
to a modern post-industrial wasteland is essentially a
pastoral theory of history - one where we are aware of being
exiled from a Golden Age or Paradise in our past when life
was simpler and more wholesome.¹ For William Carlos
Williams, "a poet (ridged) from Paradise" (P 109), the
Passaic Falls became a symbol for this myth: "the myth/
that holds up the rock, / that holds up the water" (P 39).
What Williams is drawing our attention to is the contrast
between a time and place before the Falls (corresponding, in
Paterson, to Garret Mountain Park) and a fallen, urban
society below. (Above the Falls is also "above the city" (P
7)). As symbol the Falls function on both the concrete
level (their wild romantic beauty corrupted into "the vilest
swillhole in christendom" (AG 195)) and the abstract ("The
past above, the future below" (P 144)).

One can understand why Williams saw the Falls as a
symbol handed to him, one that became "more and more the

¹The model we choose can be either classical or
Biblical. Marinelli distinguishes between the two in his
chapter on "The Golden Age", but then goes on to speak of
their later "fusion". Williams himself makes nothing of the
difference.
lucky burden of what I wanted to say" (P xiii). (In fact, symbols are almost going to have to be "handed to" a poet who believes there are "no ideas but in things"). In accord with Pound's dictum that "the natural object is always the adequate symbol" (5, emphasis in the original) Williams allowed the "elemental character" of his environment a language and meaning of its own, choosing the living world for text.2 As has often been observed, democracy (and this is a significantly democratic, if not American program) makes for strange bedfellows. Auden in his "Bucolics" also found something in the "water noise" inherently expressive of the change in man's relationship with nature that signals our exile from the Garden:

Now here, now there, some loosened element
A fruit in vigour or a dying leaf,
Utters its private idiom for descent,
And late man, listening through his latter grief,
Hears, close or far, the oldest of his joys,
Exactly as it was, the water noise. (258)

In Williams's version of the myth the falling water only makes a "noise" because it is speaking a kind of ur-tongue, or unfallen natural language modern man is "divorced" from. It is the job of the poet to interpret this "idiom for descent".

Such a theory of human history - one that tracks the progress of civilization from the Golden Age to an age of

2Rapp explains that while Williams "loudly declares himself opposed to symbolism, he does so only because, like Emerson, he believes that the facts themselves are already perfectly symbolic, perfectly metaphorical" (88).
iron - has deep psychological roots. We all carry around with us a personal sense of lost innocence and freedom. As Freud puts it, "When we look back at this unashamed period of childhood it seems to us a Paradise; and Paradise itself is no more than a group phantasy of the childhood of the individual" (343). The historical myth is thus the individual myth writ large. Tonkin provides a useful summary of how this works within the terms of pastoral:

The Golden Age looks back to an ideal past long ago, when cities were unknown and nature was kind. In pastoral works, this collective historical myth becomes a model for the past of the individual, and mankind's descent into barbarism is paralleled by the individual's growth to manhood. (283-284)

Saying, as Williams does, that "a man in himself is a city" (P 253) makes explicit an analogy between cultural progress and the growth and development of the individual. Within such an analogy early agricultural societies are given a place corresponding to civilization's metaphorical youth. On the individual level we have what is called the "pastoral of childhood". Williams pushes this connection even further, beginning his epic Paterson ab ovo with a Preface that suggests intercourse and gestation:

Rolling in, top up,
under, thrust and recoil, a great clatter:
lifted as air, boated, multicolored, a
wash of seas - (5)

We may note how Williams weaves the language of containment throughout these first few pages: beauty is
"locked in the mind" (3); the sun rises "in the slot of/
hollow suns risen" (4); a man not only lives, but lives "in
his body" (4). Larger forms of containment enfold us also,
like the cycle that will contain the poem ("For the
beginning is assuredly/ the end" (3)) and the cycle of water
rained down and
regathered into a river that flows
and encircles: (5)

This emphasis on containment and confinement can, I think,
be associated with gestation. When reading the Preface I
can never help associating the "rolling up/ heavy with
numbers" with the process of cell division following
fertilization: "by multiplication a reduction to one" (2).
(An image Williams certainly would have been familiar with
from medical textbooks.1) What I am trying to get at is
that for Williams the state of pastoral innocence for the
"nine months' wonder" that is both the city and the man is
not so much located in childhood as in the containment of
the womb - an obstetrician's hortus conclusus.

Pastoral, then, is where we begin, the garden is the
"first of our worlds". It has what can be called a pre-
historical status, outside of the world of experience we
entered into when first pushed through the gates of life
along with "a wash of seas". This is the individual myth,

---

1The cover of the first edition of Kora in Hell is a
stylized "ovum surrounded by a horde of spermatozoa" (A 158;
Fig. 1).
the basic myth that Williams is working out from, or
building on top of.

As we began by noting, pastoral writing also expresses
a vision of human history - a collective myth. If we can
say that there is a link between the development of literary
pastoral and a society's level of industrialization, then we
might expect an American pastoral tradition to begin
asserting itself in one of that country's original
manufacturing centres. And so it does, in the first
industrial city in the United States.

Long before Williams appeared on its banks, Washington
Irving had portrayed a pre-lapsarian Passaic:

In a wild, tranquil vale, fringed with forests of green,
Where nature had fashion'd a soft silvan scene,
The retreat of the ring-dove, the haunt of the deer,
Passaic in silence roll'd gentle and clear.

No grandeur of prospect astonish'd the sight,
No abruptness sublime mingles awe with delight;
There the wild flowret blossom'd, the elm proudly waved,
And pure was the current the green bank that laved.

(Irving 149)

Verse doesn't flow much more smoothly than that. The
dominant rhythmical effect is that of balance, achieved
through a regular placement of caesurae. Balance also
defines the landscape: this is nature, but nature polished
to an alliterative gloss - "the retreat of the ring-dove",

'Obviously the Eastern seaboard is one of the few areas
in the United States to have experienced enough "history" to
encompass the necessary elements of a myth of gradual
decline (the myth of a Golden Age).
"the soft silvan scene". There is wildness, but it is a "tranquil" wildness, picturesque rather than sublime.\(^5\)

Williams doesn't quote directly from Irving's poem in _Paterson_,\(^6\) but he does find a way to tap into this pastoral Passaic tradition. In Book IV of _Paterson_ there is a lengthy account of the region's history - "the past" that lies above the Falls. Most of the material is quoted verbatim from Longwell's _A Little Story of Old Paterson_, but here it is re-arranged into a series of regular stanzas. Stanzas, we might add, which are even more striking to the eye than the prose passages set off in a different size type. More than at any other point in the poem we have a feeling of being interrupted, of stepping outside the clearly defined "province of the poem" into another world. Perhaps the regularity of the verse is meant to emphasize the idyllicism of the time and place it describes:

In a deep-set valley between hills, almost hid by dense foliage lay the little village. Dominated by the Falls the surrounding country was a beautiful wilderness where mountain pink and wood violet thrived: a place inhabited only by straggling trappers and wandering Indians. (192)

---

\(^5\)Later in the poem Irving does go on to describe the Falls themselves. I take it these first two stanzas describe the area "above the Falls" (i.e., the upper Passaic). In the alternative (and the poem does seem to me ambiguous) they describe the Passaic watershed before the geologic upheavals that created the Falls (described in stanza 9).

\(^6\)Weaver finds remarkable Williams's "assiduous avoidance of any open reference to treatment of that scene [the Passaic] by earlier writers" (8).
Without getting involved in a discussion of metrics (always a tricky proposition with Williams) we may note a certain falling rhythm - as we have in the "very lay of the syllables Paterson" (A 392). The word "Paterson" is a dactyl, and in the stanza quoted we have what seems to be a characteristically prose rhythm, based on trochees and dactyls: "In a deep set valley"; "straggling trappers and wandering Indians". "N.B." the end of Paterson Book I and John Addington Symonds on the "harmony" that exists between a style of verse and its subject (P 40). A falling rhythm reminds us of the Fall.  

But the important thing to note about this snippet of local history is its pastoral quality, what Johnston calls its "Virgilian serenity" (222). The "little village" is protected by the surrounding "deep-set valley" and its

---

7Laughlin remembers "Evans" telling him: "I don't know if I ever really made it a metric. But what is metric anyway? I read all the books about it once and I still don't know." He later remarks that whatever it is it has "nothing to do with scansion" (Let 263).

8We should be aware that no less an authority than Paul Fussell, Jr. considers such terms as "rising" and "falling" meter to have "no metaphorical or symbolic value whatever". He specifically points out that a falling rhythm, in itself, does not "necessarily transmit illusions of falling nor emotions of depression or gloom" (24). Perhaps not, but it does seem fair to say that a consistent use of dactyls and trochees, especially in terminal positions (at the end of a line or stanza) represents, quite literally, a falling off from an original intensity, and contributes to a general sense of calm. Cushman's conclusion, that the dominant mode of Williams's poetry written in the triadic line (which creates a kind of visual falling rhythm as it descends the page) is elegiac, seems to me to follow from the same basic principle.
camouflage of "dense foliage". The natural environment "thrives" while the human inhabitants live independent and purposeless lives - "straggling" and "wandering" through the "beautiful wilderness". Historical Paterson is a pastoral place removed spatially, temporally and in the form of its verse from the busy outside world, the polluted present and the chaotic "bolus" of the poem. Once again geography provides the natural symbol, as Paterson's "rich colonial history" is specifically located by Williams "upstream, where the water [is] less heavily polluted" (A 391). This vision of the Passaic, like that found in the stanzas from Irving's poem, is above the Falls.

Questioning historical accuracy would, of course, be entirely inappropriate. Such a pleasant little village as Longwell describes was never found on any map. For Williams, history only exists in the first person, and thus follows many masters. Memory, as he is fond of pointing out, is just another kind of imagination:

we experience
violently
every day
two worlds
one of which we share with the rose in bloom
and one,
by far the greater,
with the past,
the world of memory,
the silly world of history,
the world
of the imagination. (CP2 309-310)
What pastoral describes is the landscape of a dream. The pastoral myth of history in essence creates a sense of nostalgia for

\[
\text{a world it never knew,} \\
\text{the green and} \\
\text{dovegrey countries of} \\
\text{the mind. (P 31)}
\]

The "world of true pastoral", writes Lascelles, "is always known for a country of the mind, to be attained only by a force of the imagination" (125). Our separation from this idealized world of memory is what gives rise to the feeling of disparity that is essential to the pastoral myth. In fact this may even be the "source of poetry"; the habit of mind that

\[
\text{hears the sound of lakewater} \\
\text{splashing - that is now stone. (CP1 459)\textsuperscript{3}}
\]

Which brings us to the Passaic Revisited (circa. 1946):

\[
\text{Half the river red, half steaming purple} \\
\text{from the factory vents, spewed out hot,} \\
\text{swirling, bubbling. The dead bank,} \\
\text{shining mud . (P 36)}
\]

The "dead bank" is a pun on the disastrous effects of Alexander Hamilton’s national banking policy on the region’s environment. Death, however, whether of the man, the river or the bank, is never the end. Even though Williams

"described the river as filthy, muddy, rotten, black, shrunken, degraded - all the unpastoral words he could think

\[\text{\textsuperscript{3}The lines allude to Yeats’s lake isle, a source Williams returns to in the Idyl that begins Paterson Book IV.}\]
of", he also saw it "as a sort of pastoral spirit presiding over his destiny" (Whittemore 4). The poet’s vision may thus involve a reversal of the action of the Falls - "in which a Falls unseen/ tumbles and rights itself" (P 97). This is essentially what Williams means when he speaks of the proximity between the descent and the ascent - that it is often through contact with urban chaos and degraded nature that we get a chance to experience an unfallen natural world of pastoral order. The two worlds are frequently juxtaposed in order to draw attention to this paradoxical relationship. Thus, in "The Wanderer" the poet’s immersion in the "filthy Passaic" takes place within the "joint solitude and temple" (CP1 117) of a sacred grove, among "Deep foliage, the thickest beeches . . . Tallest oaks and yellow birches" (11). A graphically naturalistic description of the polluted Passaic certainly didn’t fool Kenneth Rexroth. He knew that

The day will come
When a young woman will walk by the lucid Williams River,
Where it flows through an idyllic
News from nowhere sort of landscape . . . (194)

Passaic Redux.

"Above the Falls" is also Garret Park, a place that may at times seem a lot like Eden:

above the Falls, by the quiet river; Colored crystals the secret of those rocks;

---

10 A movement echoed in the description of the fire in Book III: "the waterfall of the/ flames, a cataract reversed, shooting/ upward" (121).
farms and ponds, laurel and the temperate wild cactus, yellow flowered . . . facing him, his arm supporting her, by the Valley of the Rocks, asleep. Pearls at her ankles, her monstrous hair spangled with apple-blossoms is scattered about the back country, waking their dreams - where the deer run and the wood-duck nests protecting his gallant plumage. (P 8-9)

"Gallant plumage"? One senses the ghost of Irving's ring-dove in these woods. But this is, after all, the "back country" of a pastoral dream ("the green and dovegrey countries of the mind"), where the imagination strains after deer going by fields of goldenrod (CPI 218).

Somehow, we are told in "To Elsie", too much of that "seems to destroy us". Specifically, what is destroying us is the gap between the fallen world we inhabit and that other world which is only hinted at in "isolate flecks" that are "given off". The imagination strains after this other world, which it feels to be its proper home, but we only get to experience it fleetingly, as something glimpsed, for example, through a car window.¹¹ The garden is not our "home" in any permanent sense; we are not allowed to stay in

¹¹Thus a whole series of Williams's poems dealing with things seen while out driving. One might reflect on the difference between such poems and what may be called "walking poems". When walking by something you can see more of it for a longer time as well as stop to look at it or turn around and go back. In addition, being in a car (a machine) emphasizes your separation from what it is you are looking at. Williams often uses these characteristic features of vehicular, as opposed to pedestrian, vision to emphasize pastoral distinctions. More will be said about this in Chapter Four.
Paradise (etymologically a park). This wouldn’t be a type of the Garden without an eviction:

At nine o’clock the park closes. You must be out of the lake, dressed, in your cars and going: they change into their street clothes in the back seats and move out among the trees. (80)

The myth of a Golden Age, a magical time and place above the "catastrophe" of the Falls has been described as "the major pre-condition of pastoral poetry" (Marinelli 20). This said, I can find no attempts in the critical literature to make a connection between Williams’s use of the myth and his development of a pastoral art. In particular we must observe the example of Carl Rapp, one of the best of Williams’s critics, who has considered in some depth Williams’s "own version of the myth of the fall" (6). Rapp’s primary concern, however, is in how "that conception influenced his [Williams’s] adoption of the epistemology and aesthetics of idealism" (33). No mention is made anywhere in Rapp’s writing about the relationship between such a myth and Williams’s use of pastoral. That this is even possible is due to the way the myth itself is capable of being stated in general terms that can support various theoretical frameworks. In Rapp’s analysis Williams’s version of the myth can be reduced to the statement "that the present time is essentially unsatisfactory by comparison to the remote past and to the future and that it is so because, for the moment, we have lost an original vitality or innocence which
we must struggle to regain" ("Modern Myth" 82-83). I began this Introduction with a similar statement, drawing attention to the way such a myth expresses what can be called a pastoral vision of history. In my view Williams's version of the myth must be seen within the context of his use of pastoral, since pastoral provides the organizing principle or dominant paradigm that he is relating it to.

I say so in part because the myth of the Fall, however central, is still just one of many pastoral themes that find expression in Williams's writing. Others include the references to an eternal Spring; the use of invitation; the role of the observer; the tendency to be interested in sensual experiences rather than intellectual abstraction; the presence of pathetic fallacy; the mixture of literary forms; the description of flora - all of which inform the work of Williams to a greater or lesser degree. Indeed once one begins looking for connections between Williams's writings and what are regarded as traditional pastoral "tricks" (to use Empson's term) the real problem becomes narrowing the field of study and giving it structure.

12"He [the shepherd] is not a thinker, much less a logician, or an oxymorist, but a perceiver of concrete sensations, and beautiful things" (Rosenmeyer 57, emphasis added). Wallace makes use of a similar statement by Symonds to demonstrate how "Temperamentally, Williams was as close to Theocritus as to any other poet" (28).
By multiplication a reduction to one. In calling Williams a pastoral writer one of the things we are doing is saying that pastoral provides a paradigm that allows us to organize and interpret such themes - lending a myth, as it were, to what is a strikingly pervasive habit of thought. Over the years there have been many passing comments made on Williams's pastoral, but little has been done to give the discussion a larger theoretical context. This is a pity, since a study of Williams's pastoral has the potential to be so much more than the analysis of a couple of early poems and part of Paterson Book IV. In particular, viewing Williams as a pastoral writer can help shed some new light on topics that have always been popular among his critics: (1) the relation of his writing to the visual arts; (2) his celebration of the local; (3) his attempt to define an "American idiom"; and (4) his belief that chaos or dissonance leads to "discovery". However, in order to fully understand the fascination pastoral held for Williams it is necessary first to know something more about the man.

Remembering in his Autobiography a 1931 visit to Newfoundland Williams is moved to exclaim, "it was this that I had first desired, to quit the urban life and go out into the wilderness" (274). Few would deny that this is, without going any further, a fairly common feeling. In the short story "Old Doc Rivers" Williams speaks of how a "flight to the woods or something like it, is a thing we most of us
have yearned for at one time or another, particularly those of us who live in the big cities" (FD 90). What I think Williams is adverting to in the Autobiography, however, is his first desire, which was to become a forester (Int 5). At an early age he had fallen under the influence of "idyllic moments" spent in the "local Eden" of Kipp's Woods (Mariani 21). As he was later to put it, "Kipp's Woods was my magic forest" (A 282). In fact, keeping in mind what was said about the womb-like associations we saw in the Preface to Paterson, this "first desire" might be traced to a time before childhood, even before birth:

She, Helen Walcott, was a small girl then. She lived on Home Avenue just where the path through the woods came out not far from the front yard where as a girl she would be playing. She was used to seeing Mrs. Williams come past at various times during the week on her way to make purchases. She had noted, as a little girl will, that Mrs. Williams was in not too many weeks to have a baby, and she wondered, she told Floss, what it would be, a girl or a boy.

It was I.

Perhaps that explained my love of trees and that my first wish was to be a forester. (A 281)

In later life this childhood dream of escape into a forest world had its realization in the familiar practice of spending weekends and vacations in quasi-rural settings for relaxation and refreshment. Commentators have consistently identified such holiday retreats with pastoral: from Wallace's description of Gratwick Farm having all "the
poetic attributes of a classical pastoral landscape" (8) to Mariani's reference to the "verdant pastures of that pastoral estate" (612) of Yaddo. In this they are clearly following the bent of Williams's own imagination:

How many times have I thought of that idyllic two weeks we spent at Norfolk that summer so many years ago. We took some walks in the woods, down the ravine back of the house, that come to my mind thrillingly sometimes in the middle of the night. I can see every detail of it. And hear it too. It was the hermit thrush that was the chief musician. Sounds almost silly to think of as important to a man's life but it is not pleasant to think it will in all probability not come again. Well. (Let 211)

The leisure of the walks through the "idyllic" woods; the music supplied by the obliging "chief musician" of the forest; the way it is all remembered now as something that took place "so many years ago"; the self-deprecating humility about the meaning of the whole experience. One could shrug all of this off as just a bit of cultural shorthand, but I think Williams found the experience more meaningful than that. Something very fundamental to Williams's character made him describe his visit to Norfolk in terms so redolent of pastoral.

Even Mr. Paterson, Williams remarks longingly, "has gone away/ to rest and write" (P 9). In this connection, between rest and writing, we approach the source of Williams's fascination with pastoral. The critical references to Gratwick Farm and Yaddo, both pastoral
retreats for the literati, reinforce this.\textsuperscript{13} As a busy professional, Williams naturally associated writing with leisure - something to do when on vacation, or whenever he happened to have some "time off". Williams was in many ways the archetype of the modern "divided man", in his case the doctor and the poet. One of the most remarkable aspects of his achievement is the way he was able to cast this separation into a recognizable literary shape. The "shape" I am referring to is the division of roles that is so fundamental to pastoral - the uncouth (albeit musical) swain who is also "a man of sophistication writing for a sophisticated audience" (Lynen 13).

In his association of literature with escape, leisure and lack of sophistication Williams is operating within a pastoral paradigm - one that locates poetry and music at a distance from the world of professional cares and responsibilities.\textsuperscript{14} Poggioli comments on how pastoral defines the shepherd as

the symbol of the scholar and the humanist in his moments of leisure and ease - when he is no longer a learned man, but rather a sage, reaching not for

\textsuperscript{13}In describing Alfred Kreymborg's shack in the Grantwood artist's colony Whittemore falls into the same habit, telling us that it "did not overlook the great Hudson River as a pastoral shack in the Palisades should have" (126), but was still "pastoral enough for New Yorkers" (127).

\textsuperscript{14}Of course I don't mean that Williams actually found the writing of poetry easy. He seems to have worked just as hard at the literary as the medical profession.
knowledge but for beauty and wisdom.
The shepherd then represents man neither
as homo sapiens nor as homo faber, but
only as homo artifex or, more simply, as
a musician and a poet. (23)

For "scholar and humanist" we might substitute
"professional" or "man of business". In any event, it is the
shepherd's role that "adumbrates . . . the poetic calling
itself" (Poggioli 165).

Williams's very concept of the poetic process is thus
based on an essentially pastoral model - the poet as musical
shepherd. (A "poet reading his poem" in one of the
Improvisations is described as "piping up his music" (I
56).) Displaced from the vales of Arcady to a New Jersey
suburb (about which more later) the shepherd playing upon
his oaten reed becomes an old man tending his garden. The
gardener, then, is the new symbol of the man of leisure and
poet:

tending his flower
garden, cutting his grass and trying
to get the young
to foreshorten
their errors in the use of words which
he had found so difficult, the errors
he had made in the use of the
poetic line: (P 227)
One must tend poetry as one would a garden, trimming lines like a lawn.\(^{15}\)

Doctor and poet, sophisticate and swain, professional and man of leisure - Williams insisted on adopting the double role. More precisely, he insisted on adopting a poetic alter ego that he created free from the draining pressures and complexities of modern life.

Why do you write?
For relaxation relief. To have nothing in my head - to freshen my eye by that till I see, smell, know and can reason and be. (SE 101)

How then to keep the two identities separate? "When they ask me, as of late they frequently do, how I have for so many years continued an equal interest in medicine and the poem, I reply that they amount for me to nearly the same thing" (A 286). The "one occupation complements the other. . . they are two parts of a whole" (A 359). In just this way Williams saw all dichotomies eventually resolving into an identification:

the city
the man, an identity . . .

obverse, reverse;
the drunk the sober; the illustrious
the gross; one. (P 4)

\(^{15}\)In an essay on Cummings, Williams took the analogy even further, commenting on how a poem is like a "field of daisies" we can "lie down among . . . when the sun is shining" (RI 236). In his analysis of the "poem as pastoral enclosure" Toliver discusses this "association of the poet with the shepherd and of the poem with Arcadia", stressing the "analogy between a poem and a perfect landscape" (12).
In what follows we will be seeing Williams dispel the "rumors of separate worlds" (P 25) by asserting an equivalence between them. Male and female, prose and poetry, virgin and whore: these are all the signs of divorce in our time which are made "of a piece" in the imagination. For Williams, Miller writes, ultimately "there is always and everywhere only one realm" (287). Defining the nature of this "one realm" is the next step. How Williams defines it, I believe, is in terms of pastoral.

What we find in Williams, especially in the later work, is a kind of law of infinite metaphor that provides his response to the modern plague of divorce. Under this law everything gets equated with everything else and images tend to blur into one another. A good example can be seen in "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower", where the images of sea, garden and flower become, like "all works of the imagination,/ interchangeable" (CP2 333).

We may think that such a blurring of distinctions would be antithetical to a mode of writing so dependent upon the exploitation of contrasts as pastoral. This, however, is the result of confusing pastoral's operation with its effect. Even in that essential pastoral distinction, between the city and the country, art and nature, there is an identification that is finally made. Such an identification might take a Romantic form - where seeing the city as man's ideal creation allows us to view it in human
terms, what Santayana calls "a second body for the human mind" (p 94). This is a symbolic wedding of the worlds of nature and art, and can also be seen in Blake's story of the marriage of the giant Albion with Jerusalem. Lest this seem too apocalyptic for the poet from Jersey we should note that Paterson also has a giant man who has fallen apart (and asleep) while becoming divorced from his female emanation (Mt. Garret).

Less abstractly, Lynen emphasises the paradoxical way in which Frost uses the differences between New England and the larger world as the very "means of revealing similarities" (58, emphasis in the original). What Lynen means is that the pastoral region can be described as a particular place and at the same time as a place representative of all other places - the local can become the universal. I'll be talking more about this in Chapter Three, but it is a concept so central to Williams's thought that I should introduce it briefly here.

For Williams, distinctions exist at one level of thought, an early level that is located in the local and the particular. There is always a movement, however, toward another level, the level of identity, where distinctions disappear and all we have left is the general and universal (where the "law of infinite metaphor" I referred to earlier begins to operate). This absorption into a single universal can be compared to Empson's "pantification": "treating the
symbol as everything that it symbolises, which turns out to be everything" (23). Such a process is basic to pastoral because it is the natural result of putting the complex into the simple, of "everything being included in the humble thing" (Empson 21).

In Williams this abstraction is part of a later stage of thought, one where the clearly defined trees of so many early poems become the "fuzzy-looking things" (CP1 465) his grandmother sees outside the window of her ambulance.

Again, "Asphodel" is instructive:

Approaching death,
    as we think, the death of love,
    no distinction
  any more suffices to differentiate
      the particulars
  of place and condition
with which we have been long
familiar.
  All appears
as if seen
  wavering through water. (CP2 318-319)

One thought only should give us pause. This is a direction towards "death" - Williams’s grandmother is speaking her "last words". Loss of identity may only lead us to the dissolving sea, or, in the words of another poet,

Annihilating all that’s made
To a green thought in a green shade.

Part of Williams’s "quest" in later life was to avoid such an "annihilation" by maintaining distinctions and particulars within a vision of wholeness and unity.

This characteristic of Williams’s thought is something I will be returning to in greater detail and in different
contexts later. For now I would like to conclude by introducing a final piece of context provided by some recent critical comments on urban poetry (since pastoral itself, at least by implication, expresses an attitude towards country and city).

In The Poet and the City Kristiann Versluys notes how "Throughout romantic writing . . . one finds a dual image of the city, a Janus-like symbol, showing on one side the outlines of the City Reviled, on the other that of the City Redeemed" (15). Both images, however, originate in "the rural vantage-point from which the city is seen" (15). Thus, while not pastoral poetry, such writing does incorporate something of the pastoral perspective (the perspective of the rural outsider). "The metropolis is contemplated by minds convinced of the beneficent influence of Nature; it is gauged against the touchstone of an ideal pastoral society with its resonances of harmonious living, love, joy, and idyllic happiness" (15).

Versluys then considers how Modern urban poetry moves away from this "viewpoint of Nature" to "an intra-urban vantage-point" (17). The city can no longer be measured against the country since all the poet knows is one urban realm. What this shift in perspective entails is "the replacement of intuitive knowledge and moral direction by an awareness of chaos". Modern poetry is "impregnated by the
idea that chaos [the chaos of urban reality] has to be turned (or re-turned) into order" (17).

In an article on American city poets Gert Buelens discusses Paterson in relation to this model, but goes on to challenge the "one realm" theory of Miller and Versluys, saying that "Williams rejects the idea of a more perfect, mythic, transcendent past . . . that serves as a challenge to a dreary, down-to-earth present" (258). The point Beulens is making is that Williams does not use the pastoral myth of history to condemn the present so much as to illustrate a present breakdown. This, then, is the modern myth: "although reality with Williams is no longer subjected to a comparison with an ideal that is extraneous to it, that lies beyond it, the basic process which Williams applies is still one of testing the value of reality by measuring it with the yardstick of some perfect, harmonious, non-chaotic state" (258, emphasis added). As Williams himself puts it, "There has to be that world against which the other tests itself" (SL 304). 16

Like Versluys, Buelens sees the modern urban poet confronted with a chaotic reality. He goes on to say, however, that for Williams this chaotic reality is identified not with the city but with nature, and "thus

16Williams is explicitly referring here to the pastoral distinction between the "great world" and the "primitive world" in Paterson Book IV. My point is that Beulens's "perfect, harmonious, non-chaotic state" is specifically identified by Williams with pastoral.
contains within itself the key to meaning, to order" (263). I think this is an excellent observation, but Buelens disappoints me by concluding that this key to order is a "third element" - the radiant gist.17 Ultimately, what I see happening in Williams is a vision of chaotic nature leading to an imaginative "discovery" of a greater natural order (the reversal of the Falls, taking place in the mind, that I discussed earlier). An "awareness of chaos" is the first step in a process that ends, most commonly, with pastoral.

Introducing his seminal study The Pastoral Art of Robert Frost (1960) John Lynen complained that "Pastoralism and related terms have been applied to Frost at random simply as convenient descriptive labels; no one has undertaken to examine the pastoral elements in his poetry or interpret the significance of the comparison" (8). With all humility, I feel in a similar position approaching Williams. For this reason I have begun by introducing a number of basic concepts and propositions rather than with a review of the critical material. Such a work as this has to begin with fundamentals. It will not do simply to assert that the "traditional pastoral subjects" Williams concerns himself

17Note, however, the immediate juxtaposition of Williams's musings on the radiant gist with (Marianne Moore's) Eden in Paterson Book III (109-11) and Columbus's discovery of a garden-like New World in Book IV (177).
with include "flower poems [sic]", "sex" and "the creation and destruction of a world" (Schmidt 29;38;41).

The following thesis will not seek to invent yet another "version" of modern pastoral (although this is, to a certain degree, inevitable), but rather attempt to support an interpretation of Williams's pastoral that is based on what are widely accepted historical models and critical statements. I should add that I have taken a totalizing approach to Williams's writing - assuming, as much as possible, that we can speak of the body of his work as forming a consistent whole. My intention is to try and reveal the integrity of Williams's vision of pastoral without mapping his career. One corollary to this is that I will be focusing more on large patterns in Williams's writing and less on trying to provide a running commentary on Paterson and a few other major poems. My method may be described as "an elucidation by multiplicity" (P 61), which I am sure Williams, at least, would have approved. I can only hope that my acknowledgment, in the Appendix, of the importance of "close reading" will be sufficient to satisfy those with slightly different critical tastes.

At heart this thesis will explore Williams's treatment of the pastoral dream as poetic subject matter rather than dwell on aspects of his technical achievement (again,  

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18One wonders whether any of these are pastoral subjects. The last mentioned is particularly mystifying.
insofar as this is possible). In doing so it may be useful to keep in mind the following distinction: that "the subject matter of the poem is always phantasy - what is wished for, realized in the 'dream' of the poem - but that the structure confronts something else" (SE 281, emphasis in the original). As we shall see in Chapter One it is in the realm of poetic craft and technique that Williams registers his strongest opposition to literary "tradition", whereas it is in his treatment of conventional pastoral themes and images that he feels the greatest connection with a vital and "usable" past. Though "the serious poet has admitted the whole armamentarium of the industrial age to his poems . . . Remember, we are still in a world of fancy if perhaps disguised but still a world of wish-fulfillment in dreams" (SE 282, emphasis added).

In the material that follows I want to address Williams's use of pastoral and his "enlarging" of its application in a variety of contexts. Before doing so it may be helpful to locate my own approach, at least in general terms. Pastoral theory, being a paradigm of contrasts, often makes use of critical binaries: within the literature there can be found discussions of pastorals described as hard and soft; sweet and bitter; Christian and pagan; satiric and romantic; decorative and serious; simple and complex. I intend to make use of the thesis, largely associated with the writings of Frank Kermode, that all of
the many varieties of pastoral turn "upon the poles of Art and Nature" (44). Although such an approach doesn't express any theory of pastoral per se, it does provide a useful frame of reference. In Chapters Two and Three a separate analysis of each "pole" will be undertaken. In the final chapter I want to turn to the subject of pastoral's penetration of other literary forms, and show how this relates to Williams's concept of dissonance. To begin with, however, we should address the subject of Williams's relation to the pastoral "tradition".
CHAPTER ONE
IMITATION PASTORAL

The truth is that all nations, how remote soever, being all reasonable creatures, and enjoying one and the same imagination and fantasy, have derived, according to their means and materials, the same things.

-In the American Grain

On a Sunday afternoon in late Spring Mr. Paterson goes for a walk in the park. Following some hikers up Garret Mountain he comes to "the picturesque summit", which he describes as being "the center of movement, the core of gaiety". A group of Italians have gathered for a picnic. One young man (punningly described as "dead pan") plays a guitar among some ferns while the others eat and drink. "The big guy/ in the black hat is too full to move" and lies among the "dens of sweet grass" - sheltering perhaps from the noontime heat. A woman named Mary gets up and dances, and Mr. Paterson’s thoughts drift back to the peasant in Eisenstein’s Que Viva Mexico!, and other, older images. He observes at one point,

This is the old, the very old, old upon old, the undying: even to the minute gestures, the hand holding the cup, the wine spilling, the arm stained by it. (57)

The succession of other, older images eventually concludes with a "goatherd/ and goat". It is all, I would argue, a pastoral moment: a scene of latter-day Arcadians
relaxing with wine, dance and song in a garden "devoted to pleasure" (50). The finale is the natural culmination of Mr. Paterson's backward glance.¹

Williams's interest in pastoral, of which this mountain-top vision provides perhaps the most comprehensive expression, quite literally spanned his entire writing career. The period between 1909's derivative retreat "To rural peace" and the pictures of Breughel's peasants in 1962 is filled with material substantiating his simple but emphatic claim "I love everything that's pastoral" (CP2 489). Despite this wealth of material, however, Williams's achievement as a pastoral poet has been largely overlooked.² As perhaps the twentieth century's greatest poet of the city, his seemingly perverse interest in pastoral is usually dismissed as purely ironic. Such a position is in accord with Renato Poggioli's description of modern pastoral as "ironic and ambiguous, since it begins as imitation, and ends as parody. In brief it is an inverted

¹Such an episode also works by exploiting the contrast between the urban scene that we fell into in Book I and the harmonious, natural world that Mr. Paterson discovers by "climbing up" Mt. Garret. Lloyd (referring to the passage we have just looked at) comments on how the "city discourages natural, spontaneous experience, the most striking example of which is the scene in the park where rural vitality survives amidst urban indifference" (76). This sequence, a Fall or descent into a chaos of particularity, followed by an elevation to the pastoral place, is, as we shall see, paradigmatic for Williams.

²This may be an understatement. There are no extensive discussions of Williams and pastoral in the critical literature.
pastoral, presenting a bucolic aspiration only to deny it" (33).

One finds strong support for such a view in Williams's own well documented distaste for "traditional" poetic forms ("Williams's distrust and fear of literary 'tradition' are well known" (Sankey 148)). More recent critics, however, have called Williams's anti-traditionalism into question. Rapp, for example, condemns as mistaken the "persistent cliché . . . that Williams' work represents a radical departure from tradition" ("Modern Myth" 82), while Fredman sees Williams as paired with Eliot in an idiosyncratic Modernist tradition that "keeps the ground dynamic and open" (246).

It seems to me that another way of approaching the question is to recognize the distinction we saw Williams making in the Introduction between the "subject matter" of a poem and its "structure". We might then note that Williams's criticism of tradition is invariably directed towards traditional technique and form (cf. RI 64 and Int 29-30 for his usual examples of the sonnet and iambic pentameter), and may have little application to his employment of (what he terms) the "pastoral mode".¹ (Modal pastoral, to borrow Ettin's definition, refers to works that

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¹This separation, essentially between form and content, is made repeatedly in the "Letter to an Australian Editor": "I am speaking of the forms of art . . . " (10, emphasis added); "I am not speaking of anything but forms" (11).
are "Not directly pastoral in their material, [yet] nevertheless embody those attitudes and situations traditionally dealt with in the pastoral, and along lines familiar to the pastoral" (65)). This is the distinction Yvor Winters is making in Primitivism and Decadence when he says that Williams is "an experimental poet by virtue of his meter", but "is in other respects one of the most richly traditional poets of the past hundred and fifty years" (84).

This is a very important point that we must be clear about if we are going to understand Williams's relation to the pastoral tradition. What Williams criticises as outdated literary technique and form may be defined by the word "plagiarism", which he often uses to condemn what he finds to be objectionably stale among his contemporaries ("crude symbolism . . . strained associations [and] complicated ritualistic forms designed to separate work from 'reality'" (CP1 189)). It is this "plagiarised" writing, language "divorced" from the ground that gives it relevance and dominated by centuries of formalistic baggage, that Williams opposes.

If we had to find a word for traditional writing that retains a vital relevance it would be "imitation". To understand just what Williams means by this it is necessary to return to his theory of identity and equivalence. An

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*I am, of course, borrowing this term from Spring and All, where it is used to express a relationship between the artist and "nature".*
imitation is created through a process of identification with the past, showing how "the work the two-thousand-year-old poet did and [what] we do are one piece" (CPI 189, emphasis added). Thus when translating Theocritus, Williams makes reference to how the modern poet shows:

what in the present is equivalent, not the same with his classical original. To attempt to adopt the ancient mode by a word for word rendition of the old mode is to acknowledge defeat before you start. You lose the whole thing, it becomes a lifeless imitation of a lively invention. An invention on your part has at least a chance of bringing the life into it again. (CP2 490, emphasis in the original)

Plagiarism means to copy the formal aspects of a traditional art. This is a "shameful thing" (CP2 276), a "spineless activity" (SL 297), mere repetition without invention. "Without invention" there is a formal breakdown: "nothing is well spaced . . . the line will not change"

the old will go on
repeating itself with recurring
deadliness: without invention (P 50)

Imitation, on the other hand, uses the imagination (or invention\(^5\)) to create an identity with the art of the past. Not with traditional forms and techniques, but with the dream they represent. The subject matter of the poem, we will recall from the Introduction, is always a dream, a

\(^5\)In this context the two are nearly synonymous: "The objective is not to copy nature and never was, but to imitate nature, which involved active invention, the active work of the imagination . . . " (A 241).
"phantasy" of wish fulfillment (SE 281-282). Nowhere is this more so than in regard to pastoral, which "embraces both longing and wish fulfillment" by "transfor[m][ing] into abstract visions our nightmares and daydreams, and purif[y][ing] into lucid images our ungratified yearnings" (Poggioli 40).

The importance of maintaining a distinction between these two approaches cannot be overemphasized. This is especially so when talking about Williams's use of pastoral. Pastoral is a species of art that "depends mainly upon reproduction", and is always "on the point of degenerating into a merely literary exercise" (Chambers xxxiv) - "a copy of a copy of a copy" (xxiii). Obviously, then, there is going to be a tendency to read Williams's pastoral as merely ironic. Once this stance is adopted critical judgments become predictable. The "Idyl" in Paterson Book IV, for example, is simply dismissed as "an ironic Theocritan idyl" (Whitaker 145), "a mock pastoral, satiric and sardonic in intent" (Carruth 156), and a "satiric comment on a form of poetry so divorced from life that it contains no relevance to reality" (Rodgers 109). As we can see, the ironic approach to Williams's pastoral is capable of becoming every bit as limited and limiting as one that emphasises Williams's traditionalism.

My position can be summarized: Williams's criticism of literary tradition has no application to his attitude
towards pastoral. When dealing with Williams's pastoral we must be prepared to recognize his acceptance of a great deal of the pastoral tradition. Poggioli's claim that modern pastorals "break all traditional patterns and attitudes" (33) has to be firmly rejected. We should also remember that Williams is one of the least ironic writers imaginable, and it hardly seems likely that he would carry something as obvious as the denial of the bucolic ideal to such extreme lengths. When Williams does choose to do something in this vein (as in poem XXV from Spring and All or the convent section at the end of Paterson Book I) he usually does so directly. The argument of "Raleigh was Right", that we "cannot go to the country" (CP2 17), is made too quickly to explain a lifetime's inspiration.

Some improvement on the strictly ironic reading of Williams's pastoral is registered in Whittemore's comment

The following observation, from Rod Townley's study of Williams's early poetry, is entirely apposite:
In his "pastorals," Williams is undoubtedly aware that he is working in a distinguished literary tradition. That fact does not, however, seem to disturb him, perhaps because the tradition happens to correspond to his own modes of thinking and feeling. If pastoral poetry had not existed, Williams would have invented it. (127)

In a draft note Williams suggested that "the monastery in the country" was intended to be seen "as compensation or correlative to the city and its draggle" (qtd. Thirlwall 274). However, as Thirlwall points out, in the published version the convent merely "pretends a mystery" (P 37) that is "the complement exact of vulgar streets" (P 38).
that Williams "was laying out a pastoral philosophy while denying pastoral conventions":

What WCW was trying his hand at was, in William Empson's phrase, proletarian pastoral. Replace the shepherds with common industrial city folk, provide a city setting rather than a mountain retreat, put in the dung and the toughness; but keep the innocence of the old rural thing, keep the sense of the untainted life (in comparison with the monied, middle-class life) with all its honesties, its devotion to the good and the true. (112)

"Proletarian pastoral" is a seductive phrase; unfortunately it is not one that Empson uses. In "Proletarian Literature", the first chapter of Some Versions of Pastoral, Empson claims that "good proletarian art is usually Covert Pastoral" (6). In other words it isn't really proletarian art at all, which is later dismissed as a "bogus concept" (15). Ten years earlier Williams had dealt with the problem with characteristic directness: "There cannot be two [i.e. proletarian and aristocratic] arts of poetry really. There is weight and there is disencumberedness . . . There cannot be a proletarian art - even among savages" (I 316).

What Williams means is simply that in becoming art a "democracy of feeling" necessarily becomes organized into a pattern that will bear some resemblance to "aristocratic and ritualistic art" (I 316). By absorbing the proletariat into its own social vision pastoral "and its covert assertions/for art" (CP2 389) deprives it of any political
significance. Furthermore, pastoral (as opposed to what Auden describes as Utopianism) locates itself in the past - it does not provide a vision of the future or model for a revolutionary new society. Williams casts a cold eye on the hope that a return to "natural living" can be a cure for the ills of modern life. After describing the rural retreat of John Herrmann and Josephine Herbst he concludes that "such idyllic things can't last in our day" (A 270). Growing your own vegetables, living cheap and running around barefoot - the "new peasant" lifestyle - doesn't provide a realistic alternative to urban living and all of its attendant bother:

It is not in a return to the ideals preserved for us by primitive peoples that our society will heal itself of its maladies. (CP2 206)

After having been delivered, "a nine month's wonder" from our state of womb-like innocence "there is/ no return" (P 4).  

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8Poggioli points out that pastoral is never really proletarian since it presents the social lot of the lower classes "not as a curse to be dispelled but as a blessing to be restored" (30). In his analysis this means "that normally there is no political pastoral but of the conservative Right" (30). Keeping this in mind, note Bram Dijkstra's observation that when "we browse through Williams's poetry, it is true that the portraits of peasants or workers we encounter tend to be those of specimens of robust, healthy, 'earthy' humanity not far removed from those 'noble savages of labor' one encounters in Victorian art" ("Introduction" 19-20).

9A point made by the story of the eagle that tries to crawl back into its egg (P 73).
One of the important contributions Whittemore does make is his location of Williams's pastoral within the suburbs (as opposed to the metropolis itself). This modern displacement has not gone without notice. In *The Oaten Flute* Poggioli remarks how the "pastoral ideal seems to survive . . . even in our mores, where the old-fashioned retreat to a farm or a villa is replaced by a flight to Suburbia" (33). Thus Joe in *White Mule*, an urban immigrant who works as a foreman at a downtown printing house, entertains sentimental dreams of how he will one day "leave the city - go out to the suburbs, take a house, have a garden - and begin to live" (22).¹⁰

¹⁰Jumping ahead some 20 years we find the culmination of the Stecher's upward (and outward) mobility in an idyllic spot which "was ideal as a place to which a New York businessman and his family could retire for relaxation and the enjoyment of the beauties of nature in Summer" (*BU* 314).
Such aspirations in Williams are meant to be viewed neither sympathetically (as childish) nor with contempt. While one "certainly can call the suburban ideal a 'pseudo-pastoral' . . . it is the attraction of the vision, not the truth of it that is important" (Frail 14). After all, Joe's dream suburb turns out to be Riverdale (read Rutherford), New Jersey, home of that eternal suburbanite Williams himself. "Come over to this suburb", he wrote to Zukofsky in 1928, "for a country meal and a talk and explain to me what all has taken place in 'the centre' while I have been rusticking" (SL 93).

This vision of suburbia as a pastoral oasis is not as far-fetched as it might sound today (in fact, given the consistent decay of America's inner cities, it might be even more relevant). Whittemore, for example, draws attention to Rutherford's "leafy and pleasant square mile" (2) - "an odd

11 "Hostility to the suburbs [among early Modernist writers] . . . quickly fused with contempt for those who lived in them. The supposed low quality of life encouraged by suburban conditions became a favourite theme for intellectual ridicule or censure" (Carey 50-51). It is hard to miss something of the same attitude present in Poggioli's acerbic comment. Williams had to deal with an extreme case of modern anti-suburban sentiment when translating a passage describing the "pitiful suburb, like a corpse rotting at the edge of the Seine" (81) in Les Derniers Nuits de Paris:

In spite of the dark I detected the presence of that slimy gigantic leper who seems ready to attack the city. The low and irregular houses were like bubbles in a marsh. Country of stray dogs, the suburb exhibited its pustules, as a prostitute her pox. (Soupault 80)

One recognizes the motifs of disease, prostitution (and even stray dogs) appearing in Paterson.
small town refuge in the industrial jungle" (7). Further support for the suburban pastoral position may be found in what James Machor refers to as the "rural-urban synthesis" of American urban pastoralism: "an alternate 'middle' realm [identified with the suburbs] in which the city blends harmoniously with the countryside or contains within its own boundaries urbanity, complexity, and sophistication combined with the physical or social attributes of simple rusticity" (14). The suburbs, in other words, are akin to what Leo Marx calls pastoral's "middle landscape": "a middle ground somewhere 'between,' yet in a transcendent relation to, the opposing forces of civilization and nature" (23). Such an insight is valuable in reading Williams's pastoral because of the freedom it provides from the traditional focus on parody in the modern versions of the form. Unfortunately, it is also true that the more we find a "healthy, harmonious urban-pastoral society combining the best of both worlds" (Machor 5) the less we find anything that can truly be considered pastoral.13

12Buelens sees Paterson as "occupying a position somewhere between the two extremes" of "Crane's Megalopolis New York City" and "Olson's fisher village Gloucester" (248).

13It is interesting to note, merely in passing, that Machor's great originator of the American pastoral city, the architect L'Enfant, designed a plan for Paterson which was ultimately rejected as being "more magnificent than practical" (P 74).
Finally, replacing the "shepherds with common industrial city folk" is not going to make pastoral any more proletarian, just more contemporary. But this, of course, doesn't involve any shift in political consciousness or rejection of tradition. Tradition, for Williams, is not so easy to evade. "How can the old and the classic, the best of it, be rejected", Williams asks, "any more than the foundations of a house can be cut away"? ("Four Letters" 74). "It may be said that I wish to destroy the past", he writes in "The Poem as a Field of Action", but really "it is precisely a service to tradition, honoring it and serving it that is envisioned and intended by my attack, and not disfigurement - confirming and enlarging its application" (SE 284, emphasis in the original).14

The process at work here, the enlarging of pastoral's application, can be likened to what Northrop Frye calls displacement: "the adaptation of myth and metaphor to canons of morality or plausibility" (365). For an imagistic poet this adaptation (or "imitation", to use a term already encountered) will necessarily require an involvement with the contemporary scene. In fact, "in the best pastoral poetry the traditional materials are almost always reinvigorated by combination with a large measure of realism" (Lynen 16). "I respected the rules", Williams told

14Note the implied rejection of irony or parody in the words "not disfigurement".
Edith Heal, "but I decided I must define the traditional in terms of my own world" (IWWP 74).

Simply redefining the traditional in this way is not an inherently parodic or ironic project. Still, irony involves a more sophisticated attitude towards tradition than we have been considering, and it may be thought that Williams's attitude towards pastoral fits within its broader range. As I have already indicated, however, I don't think that Williams is, in any meaningful sense of the word, an ironic writer.

I am sure that at first such a pronouncement will be met with intense opposition - something that probably has a lot to do with the critical biases of the day. As critics we have become so dependent on irony that we feel uncomfortably disarmed by its absence. An excellent summary of the primacy of irony in twentieth-century literary criticism is provided in William Van O'Connor and Ernest Behler's article on the subject in The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics. From the New Criticism, which saw irony as the "'principle of structure' in literary works", to Paul de Man's use of irony in such a way as to make its meaning "practically coincide with the notion of deconstruction" irony has maintained a place of fundamental importance within the modern critical tradition. The authors conclude that "during the modern period, beginning with romanticism, irony has become inseparable
from literary and poetic expression itself" (635, emphasis added).

Another more recent critical movement, the New Historicism, insists that irony demonstrates the author's awareness of, if not critical attitude towards, authoritarian ideologies inherent in cultural (literary) forms. This has especially been the case in pastoral studies, where pastoral is often arraigned for simply being a historical whitewash of the actual working conditions of the rural poor (cf. note 8). In order to defend the text the critic has to insist on the author's ironic attitude towards pastoral, and make everything into a kind of sly parody.

This is the approach utilized by Mark Jones in his recent article on Wordsworth's Michael. Jones adopts a Bakhtinian ironic continuum, which measures irony ranging "from external and crude literary parody (where nothing more than parody is intended) to an almost complete solidarity with the parodied discourse ('romantic irony')" (qtd. Jones 1111), in order to deflect New Historicist criticism away from Wordsworth's apparent idealization of rural life. Not surprisingly, he concludes by locating Wordsworth's pastoral at the latter end of the spectrum, with a form of parody that celebrates "irreducible doubleness, what Bakhtin calls parody's 'unresolved conversation' of opposed voices" (1109).
This may be a perfectly valid reading of Wordsworth (and Bakhtin); my problem with it is that it seems to involve a dangerous watering down of the concept of irony. One must question whether irony is a term that simply has to be made to apply to all literature. From what I have already said it will be clear that overcoming such a critical prejudice is an essential step in defining Williams's attitude towards the pastoral tradition. Upon reflection it should be obvious that Williams's peculiar virtues - definitiveness, enthusiasm, spontaneity - are hardly compatible with an ironic vision. (Poetry, he once said, is the "only art which is explicit" (SE 340).) In fact Williams seems to have taken some pains to distance himself from those critics who "can't say one clear word to the purpose . . . except 'irony'" (qtd. Sankey 85-86). In the essay "Yours, O Youth" he even identifies "the unironic . . . vision of youth" with what is "definitely and singularly American" (SE 34).  

When I say that Williams is not using pastoral ironically I am not addressing those aspects of pastoral that make it, in Ettin's phrase, an inherently ironic mode.

15Note also the connection made in the Introduction between Williams's pastoral and his use of terminal trochees and dactyls. A terminal trochee, Fussell tells us, is often used "to reinforce a tone of colloquial 'sincerity,' to persuade us . . . that we are in the presence . . . of a simple straightforward speaker whose open commitment to what he is saying is so uncomplicated by doubts or irony that it would be a distinct discourtesy not to take his words at face value" (70).
What I am saying is that Williams is not taking an ironic stance towards pastoral, or invoking pastoral ironically in order to show the extent of our removal both from Arcadia and anything like an Arcadian tradition. Zukofsky's "A" provides an excellent example of this latter sort of irony, and seems typical, to this extent, of more modern attitudes towards pastoral. In A-1 he begins by describing a performance of Bach's St. Matthew's passion. Later, outside Carnegie Hall, he tells of how

A German lady there said:
(Heart turned to thee)
"I, too, was born in Arcadia."

Now this is irony. The German woman is apparently drawing attention to her shared nationality with the "motley/ country people in Leipzig" that Zukofsky earlier contrasted with the "Black full dress of the audience" listening to the concert. Perhaps she is making reference to a happy childhood spent in the home country. The irony, however, is that her version of et in Arcadia ego is a line attributable to death (something Zukofsky, to his credit, was well aware of before Panofsky). The German lady's comment only highlights how representative she is of her "Dead century". By making her words, in effect, provide a meaning the exact opposite of what she

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16 Williams was supposed to meet him there, but couldn't make it (SL 94-95).
intended Zukofsky makes the point of how great a distance there is between Leipzig 1729 and New York 1928.

While Zukofsky makes this point very effectively, we can see how irony makes his use of pastoral very different from anything Williams would have thought of doing. While Williams recognizes the pastoral myth of history, he never uses the past as a stick to beat the present, and his pastoral writing has none of this condemnation of a "Dead century". Zukofsky, on the other hand, fits Poggioli's vision of modern pastoral, suggesting a bucolic ideal (the motley country women of Leipzig and their super-fruitful Kappelmeister) only to deny it.

Returning to our discussion of Williams's pastoral (and what is admittedly a much simpler poem), we find the following observation:

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the old man who goes about
 gathering dog-lime
 walks in the gutter
 without looking up
 and his tread
 is more majestic than
 that of the Episcopal minister
 approaching the pulpit
 of a Sunday. (CP1 70)
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This is ironic, but only in the sense that pastoral is inherently ironic. That is, the pastoral perspective inverts our normal scale of values and claims that a more natural, rural existence can be more highly "civilized" than a cultured, urban one.
There is, however, nothing ironic about Williams's use of this perspective in an entirely urban context. All Williams is really doing is defining the traditional in terms of his own world. The poet may be astonished "beyond words" by what he sees, but the reader is well prepared for it by the poem's structure. As the sparrows in the first section of the poem are to us (a natural vs. an artificial kind of existence), so the old man is to the Episcopal minister. The poetic world is displaced into a real world of paved streets and dog-limed sidewalks. Williams, in effect, preserves the "work's mythic form through its realistic content" (Hamilton 69, emphasis in the original).

Describing his approach to poetry, Williams once said, "Basically I am a most conventional person" (SL 286). Certainly Williams's adherence to conventional pastoral attitudes can hardly be overestimated. In the second "Pastoral" poem we can see another example of this at work.

The first, and I believe most important, observation to make about this poem concerns its tone. Williams is an emphatic writer who often expresses himself in sharply assertive bursts. I know of few other poets as profligate and seemingly indiscriminate in their use of exclamation marks (one recognizes the influence of Whitman). Williams, however, is capable of writing in a more relaxed vein as well, which is what we may expect to see him doing in his more purely pastoral moments.
This relaxed tone is evident in the "Pastoral" poem already examined. Williams's switch to beginning each line in the lower case and change in punctuation (making the watcher's astonishment part of a quieter revelation in the final version of the poem by dropping the 1914 exclamation mark) are clear, if somewhat superficial manifestations of the gentler idyllic style he was in the process of developing. There may, in addition, be some connection between this gentler tone and the falling rhythm noticed in the Introduction (cf. Introduction note 8). Note how many of the lines tail off into feminine endings: "sparrows"; "pavement"; "quarreling"; "voices"; "wiser". I said earlier that Williams's use of this rhythm helps create a general feeling of calm retirement. Such a metrical trick reinforces this poem's presentation of pastoral humility.

Perhaps more significantly, however, we may note the way the old man "goes about" his duties in a obviously desultory manner, as opposed to the purposive minister dutifully "approaching" his pulpit "of a Sunday". Lynen's work on Robert Frost's use of colloquial language is helpful in this context. As Lynen notes, speakers of English "may be said to know two tongues - the formal, more tightly organized literary language and the language of everyday speech" (87). "We poets", Williams explains, "have to talk

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17 Townley also notes how the shift from "Then again" to "Meanwhile" "softens the relationship of the first to the second stanza from an opposition to a simultaneity" (79).
in a language which is not English. It is the American idiom" (P 222). This "idiom", opposed as it is to "formal . . . tightly organized literary language" is the modern pastoral style.

Its operation can be seen in the aforementioned descriptions of the old man who colloquially "goes about" his job and the minister who archaically heads to church "of a Sunday". Other examples are easy to spot in what I have characterized as Williams's relaxed pastoral idiom. One senses it even in the poet's being astonished "beyond words". In the other "Pastoral" poem, the poet thinks back to how he felt he "must make something of" himself. Amid the clutter of the run-down houses he notices "furniture gone wrong". Such expressions as these fit Lynen's description of colloquial language as both wordy and vague, characterized by its phrasing rather than its diction. "I am", Williams insisted, "a stickler for the normal contour of phrase which is characteristic of the language as we speak it" (SL 317). In his study of Frost, Lynen goes on to insist that the relevance of such language lies in its relation to a particular kind of speaker and the way such a character embodies a union of the poem's style and content. I would like to briefly turn now to this aspect of Williams's pastoral.

18 "Idiom" obviously being "more identified with speech" than "language" (IWWP 65).
"I was always a country boy, felt myself a country boy" (IWWP 21). Such a comment is essential to an understanding of Williams's pastoral because it so clearly locates his position as rural outsider. As we have already seen, this could take place on a local level - as "rusticating" in the suburbs, removed from the urban centre. ("I don't live in a city", Williams told Thirlwall in 1953, "I live in a country town" (Thirlwall 308)\(^{19}\)). It could also, more problematically, occur in an international context. Seen from this perspective, Williams becomes the somewhat provincial Yankee "clodhopper in verse" (SL 41) living in a "backward country" (I 364). This raises the difficult question of Williams's self-conscious "provincialism", which will have to wait for further analysis until Chapter Three.

On a more practical historical level one should also keep in mind the genuine rural flavour turn-of-the-century urban America still possessed. Even the New York City of Williams's childhood was capable of suffering odd intrusions of the garden:

> On the way they came to a place where sheep were going through a gate in the fence which an old man was holding open for them. There was a dog beside him as the grey bodies shuffled through, knocking together and backing up then

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\(^{19}\)Frail points out that as early as 1889 the Rutherford News had announced "We are no longer a little country town" (15). It is probably this attitude that made both Olson and Creeley wonder at times if Williams even knew what a city was (Lloyd 53).
flowing again past him. Gurlie was surprised.

Sheep? she said. In Central Park? I didn’t know that. (WM 176 - the year is 1894)

Rutherford, in turn, was a community of dirt streets and plank sidewalks, "no water supply, no gas, no electricity, no telephone, not even a trolley car" (Mariani 23).

"Instead of those ‘improvements’ we had cesspools in the back yard and outhouses as on any farm - all this within ten miles of the metropolis" (A 279). It is that last note of surprise which holds the key - "all this within ten miles of the metropolis". There is the dramatic juxtaposition of country and city (still noticeable driving into New York City from Paterson today) that feeds the pastoral imagination. In Kermode’s analysis the "first condition of pastoral poetry is that there should be a sharp difference between two ways of life, the rustic and the urban" (14). This contrast between town and country is the "social aspect of the great Art-Nature antithesis which is philosophically the basis of pastoral literature" (37). One sees such a juxtaposition clearly in Gael Turnbull’s description of the drive out to 9 Ridge Road from Manhattan in 1958:

The chaos of cars, noises, down the canyons between the skyscrapers, to roar through the Lincoln Tunnel under the river (like a packet in a vacuum tube). Out on a maze of overpasses and expressways, dodging the big cars. Out, out, in a landscape of factories and desolate wastes, where a man seemed an impertinence.
Then a sign: Rutherford, and abruptly we were in a "small town", trees, grassy lawns, white frame houses, quiet main street, parking meters, tucked away, gentle. (And yet, only a few moments ago, looking back in the rear mirror I had seen the whole skyline of New York, tremble in the sun, military, metallic, Cyclopean.) (Int 91)

Place, for Williams, is always so much more than place. Few writers have been so demonstrably affected by their local environment. Place, however, is also a given. The genuinely pastoral qualities that Rutherford possessed were "handed to" Williams much like the natural symbol of the Falls. Williams's achievement as a pastoral writer was to recognize the mythopoeic potential in this material and create a style and tone appropriate for its expression.

When speaking of tone we usually mean an attitude as well as a particular attribute of style. According to Peter Marinelli the pastoral "attitude" has two fundamental elements: "a lack of ambition and aspiration, which implies a virtuous lack of the avarice and pride which are their source; and a desire for sinless pleasure, which in turn implies a virtuous lack of the passion of lust" (15). Rosenmeyer provides an instructive summary:

Within the pastoral, otium is two things; it is the condition under which the herdsmen operate, the social and

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20See also Hallet Smith's Elizabethan Poetry: "The shepherd is not motivated by ambition or by greed. Free from these two common human passions, he enjoys 'content,' or the good life. Elizabethan pastoral poetry is essentially a celebration of this ideal of content, of otium" (8).
psychological characteristics of their world; but it is also a function of the ethos of the poem, the idea which the poem is expected to communicate over and beyond the dramatic realities within it.

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Bearing both of these qualities in mind I would like to introduce another early poem, entitled "Idyl":

They say to me, "There is
A roaring god outside
Beating the trees!"
I go hurriedly
And find
Two unfortunates
Cowering in the wind.
I think of this
As I lie here, warm
Watching the blinding white
That was saffron
Change to steel blue
Behind shaking trees.

I raise my head and
Sight leaps twenty miles
To the bleak horizon,
"But my desires,"
I say to myself
"Are thirty years
Behind all this."

It is late.
My wife comes out
And tucks me in
Telling me
Not to hurry -
- Not to hurry!
She brings our baby
And puts him
In the bed beside me.
I move over
Into the cold sheets
To make room for him
And thinking
Of the freezing poor
I consider myself

Happy -
Then we kiss. (CP1 48-9)
Once again we have the presentation of two worlds: one of violent nature and social injustice, the other of peacefulness and familial warmth. One realizes immediately that this is hardly a "proletarian pastoral" contrasting the virtues of the poor with "the monied middle-class life". On the other hand, we would be just as wrong to politicize such a poem by making the man in bed an idle professional apathetic to the plight of the "freezing poor" outside his window. The man in bed is beyond any consideration of inequalities in the economic system and obviously feels no sense of guilt. Such a thing as "desire" is thirty years behind him. He is altogether removed from the "roaring god . . . beating the trees", the "two unfortunates cowering in the wind", and all worldly desires and aspirations. He merely lies in bed with his wife and child enjoying the virtuous exercise of sinless pleasure: "a concurrence of the two strongest Passions, Laziness and Love" (qtd. Congleton 302).

I would like to turn briefly now to another of the "Pastoral" poems from Al Que Quiere! Immediately we are

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21 Whittemore is continually making the "monied middle-class" into Williams's bete noir. In fact, Williams's pastoral is largely based on its shift "from being a luxury of the rich to a preoccupation of an urban middle-class" (Schmitt 14).

22 The quotation is from Fontenelle's definition of pastoral poetry, as translated by Motteux.
confronted with the contrast between the youthful world of ambition and the more mature vision of the pastoral poet:

When I was younger
it was plain to me
I must make something of myself.
Older now
I walk back streets
admiring the houses
of the very poor: (CP1 64)

As in the first "Pastoral" poem we looked at, the poet finds something to admire in the lives of the "very poor" - some quiet virtue that does not draw attention to itself. Part of the reason for this admiration, particularly relevant to the present poem, is suggested by Williams's later comment that "It's the anarchy of poverty/ delights me" (CP1 452). For now (and more will have to be said about this later) we can see "anarchy" as representing the absence of any determined purpose, plan or design (the world of the minister and those who want to make something of themselves). As in the case of the recumbent figure in "Idyl" this kind of desire is "years behind" the pastoral poet. Ambition is not a part of the pastoral ideal, its place being in epic forms and other work "of vast import to the nation".

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23 Williams's privileging of a mature perspective in these poems can be related to Poggioli's description of the pastoral of innocence, which prefers old age to youth.

24 "The central meaning of pastoral is the rejection of the aspiring mind" (Smith 10).
As in life, so in art: the poem is representative of Williams at his quietest and most contemplative. What the poet enjoys in the scene is that careless blend of nature and art that typifies the Golden Age. The various houses and their attendant clutter

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all
if I am fortunate,
smeared a bluish green
that properly weathered
pleases me best
of all colors.
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A "bluish green . . . properly weathered": nature and art happily combine to create the poet’s pleasing vision\(^{25}\) (one is reminded of the red wheelbarrow "glazed with rain water"). However, and it is important to note this, such visions present themselves to the spectator only if he is "fortunate". Moments of vision are arbitrary, not cultivated by the connoisseur.

Such a poem as "Pastoral" is not without its potential ironies. The poet, for example, seems to have "made something" of himself in order to achieve his sense of aesthetic distance. This irony, however, is not critical to any understanding of Williams’s pastoral. In this poem, as in the other poems we have looked at, Williams is not turning traditional pastoral notions on their head.

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\(^{25}\) Whitaker makes the same observation, noting the "reversal in implication" in the use of "properly" and "weathered": "both art and nature reside in that ‘bluish green’" (41).
Of course, the chief criticism that can be levelled against an unironic modern pastoral is its sentimentality. This is an issue we should not back away from: "In order to understand Williams at all, it is necessary to say at once that he has a sentimental side" (Stevens 213). We should brace ourselves for the exposure of this aspect of Williams's poetic, especially as it finds expression in his pastoral writing. As we shall see in the next chapter, sentimentality is one of the dangers that every pastoral writer faces, and Williams was far from being an exception.

This said, I hope it will become apparent that to argue, as I have, that Williams's use of pastoral is essentially conventional is not to diminish its complexity. Even the staid Poggioli will allow that "[c]onvention may become invention, thus creating reality anew" (36). Indeed, it is Williams's insistence on adopting a traditional attitude that creates some of his most resonant and lasting work. It is a central part of Paterson's quest for origins, for "the old, the very old, old upon old" that lies somewhere at the core of modernity. It is Mary's dance in the park and the clomping boots of peasants at a wedding that is made the measure of "all we know".
Poems have a separate existence uncompelled by nature or the supernatural. There is a "special" place which poems, as all works of art must occupy, but it is quite the same as that where bricks or colored threads are handled.

"Marianne Moore", Selected Essays

Longus's pastoral romance Daphnis and Chloe begins with the author's discovery of a work of art:

Once while I was hunting in Lesbos I saw in a grove of Nymphs the fairest sight I have ever seen. It was the painted picture of a tale of love. The grove itself was beautiful; it was thick with trees, and abounding in flowers, all well-watered by a single fountain which brought refreshment to both alike. But more delightful still was that picture, both for its consummate art and for its tale of love. Its fame drew many visitors, even from a distance, to supplicate the Nymphs and to view the painting. In it were represented women in childbed, and others fitting swaddling clothes upon infants. There were sheep nursing them and shepherds taking them up; there were young lovers pledging faith to one another, an incursion of pirates, and attack by invaders. All these scenes spoke of love, and as I looked upon and admired them I conceived a strong desire to compose a literary pendant to that painted picture. (3)

The connection between pastoral and the visual arts is often this direct, with the relationship more often than not going the other way (as in the Shepheardes Calender, where
the woodcuts provide a "visual pendant"). Pastoral writing usually invites us to view its world with a certain amount of objectification, at an aesthetic distance. Pastoral scenes and images frequently have about them a quality of conscious artifice, as though being presented on display. In literature, one is just as likely to be confronted by pastoral in an art gallery as any rural *locus amoenus*:

> But, if the spectator broods long over the statue, he will be conscious of its spell; all the pleasantness of sylvan life, all the genial and happy characteristics of creatures that dwell in woods and fields, will seem mingled and kneaded into one substance, along with the kindred qualities in the human soul. Trees, grass, flowers, woodland streamlets, cattle, deer, and unsophisticated man! The essence of all these was compressed long ago, and still exists, within that discoloured marble surface of the Faun of Praxiteles. (Hawthorne 10)

Despite its "extremely vague literary history" (Wells 10) I think we can see a basis for the connection of pastoral and the visual arts simply in Williams's frequent use of the term "idyll" (rather than, say, "eclogue" or "bucolic"). The Greek *eidos* is usually interpreted as "form" or "picture", which provides authority for translating the diminutive "eidyllion" as "little picture" in order to express the "picturesque" quality of idyllic writing. The work of John Addington Symonds on the Greek poets is representative: "The name of the idyll sufficiently explains its nature. It is a little
Perhaps the plastic arts determined the direction of Idyllic poetry, suggesting the name and supplying the poet with models of compact and picturesque treatment. In reading the Idylls it should never be forgotten that they are pictures, so studied and designed by their authors. They ought to affect us in the same way as the bas-reliefs and vases of Greek art, in which dramatic action is presented at one moment of its evolution, and beautiful forms are grouped together with such simplicity as to need but little story to enhance their value. If we approach the Idylls from this point of view, and regard them as very highly finished works of decorative art, we shall probably be able to enjoy their loveliness without complaining that the shepherds and shepherdesses are too refined, or that the landscapes have not been drawn from nature. (Symonds 474)

This approach may be somewhat dated by today's critical standards, but Williams read Symonds¹ - in fact he even took a paragraph from Studies of the Greek Poets and placed it as an afterthought at the end of Paterson Book I. For a layman with no knowledge of Greek but a passionate interest in classical pastoral such views undoubtedly carried considerable weight.² Certainly in a letter to Marianne Moore commenting on the Corydon and Phyllis episode in Paterson Book IV Williams seems to assume that the terms

¹"I'm having fun reading the history of Greek lit.: Studies of the Greek Poets by John Addington Symonds" (Let 111).

²At least some classical pastoral, that is. I can find no evidence that Williams ever read Virgil's Eclogues.
"idyll" and "picture" are, if not to some extent interchangeable, at least highly suggestive of each other (SL 305). It is significant that Williams seems to lose interest in his translation of "Theocritus: Idyl I" immediately after describing the engravings on the decorated cup.¹

Perhaps no subject has received, and continues to receive, so much attention in Williams criticism as his relation to the visual arts. Throughout his career as a writer he maintained that there was an essential identity between the arts: "For poet read - artist, painter" (qtd. Dijkstra "Introduction" 2). He also had many close acquaintances within the artistic community and was clearly influenced by many of the new developments in painting, sculpture and photography. Moreover, this interest in Modern art was something he kept up throughout his life, remaining constant to the "new" as it appeared in everything from Picasso to Pollock.

This said, it seems to me fair to say that perhaps too much emphasis has been placed on the connection between Williams and the Modernist avant-garde. There are two reasons for avoiding this bias in the present study. In the first place, Williams's interest in Modern art usually only

³David Heckel is of the curious opinion that Williams's "Idyl I" is a prologue to "The Desert Music" (which structurally and thematically takes the place of the lament for Daphnis).
extends to an analysis of its experimentation in technique and advancement in form. While these are unquestionably major influences, they tell us little that is relevant to Williams's development of a pastoral art. As we saw in Chapter One, when looking at Williams's pastoral we have to keep in mind the distinction that he makes between form and content (the subject matter of a poem and its structure). I made the comment then that his views on form had no real relevance to his attitudes towards pastoral. This same dichotomy is expressed throughout his writings on the visual arts, with similar results. As a consequence, one finds Williams's pastoral being influenced less by Modern art than the European tradition. For example, two major sources informing Williams's later pastoral are the paintings of Breughel and the Unicorn tapestries, neither of which is in any way Modern.

Secondly, even if we were to accept the New York Armory Show (1913) as being the watershed Williams claimed it to be, we would have to consider it a decidedly late influence. What, we must ask ourselves, were Williams's influences in the visual arts before then?

Williams's earliest influence (not including his mother) was John Wilson, "a failure of an artist who used to  

4"In fact, when we move away from a consideration of Williams's involvement in the immediate technical aspects of Modernist experimentation, the conservative cast of his thought becomes more and more apparent" (Dijkstra "Introduction" 11).
paint, right out of his head, landscapes and cows" (A 61). This is practically all we are told about John Wilson, but it certainly tells us a lot about Williams's early association of pastoral with painting. When Williams went out "into the fields along the river . . . to do some painting as Mr. Wilson had taught me" (A 106) he went to where the "Passaic has a bit of pastoral about it" and made it "look like Rousseau's wilderness" (Whittemore 8). One oil painting that Williams did of this "green, leafy, and pastoral" (Whittemore 42) Passaic has survived, and its treatment of the river as a soft Impressionistic blur speaks volumes (Fig. 2). It is the visual counterpart of Irving's idyllic verse, and, for all of its treatment of the modern scene, may as well have been painted at the same time.

It seems to me crucial to recognize such early influences and attitudes. The area of New Jersey Williams grew up in had a rich artistic heritage. Weaver, for example, notes that Williams "would surely have known the work of George Inness, the New Jersey landscape painter" (8). It seems equally certain that he would have been acquainted with the Hudson River school of painters, "the most indigenous school of art that ever flourished in the United States" (Flexner 47).\textsuperscript{5} We know for a fact that he had seen Paul Sandby's etching of the Romantic "old Falls"

\textsuperscript{5}There may be an allusion to this school in the enigmatic notes for Paterson Book VI: "old Hudson River work, might as/ well have been of Paterson" (238).
(Fig. 3), since it is provided as a visual reference to the historical materials in Paterson Book IV (where it is referred to as "excellent work" (193)). As much as we may choose to emphasize the values of Modern art in Williams's writing, we should not do so at the expense of failing to acknowledge a youth spent surrounded by Romantic and picturesque landscape painting. This was the art wherein his fascination with pastoral sank roots.

As we saw in the case of Longus, one way pastoral imagery can come about is by a direct borrowing from the visual arts. This kind of borrowing leads to what Henry Sayre calls Williams's second form of "visual text",

a kind of text which not only maintains the first kind of visual experience ["something we encounter visually before we begin to read it"] but also takes for its subject matter that very experience - the re-creation of a "Picture from Breughel," for example. (6)

Here we have the creation of the "literary pendant" - which, we must note, does not imply inferiority but rather a kind of equivalence. It is the imagisme that Pound saw in the later Yeats: "poetry which seems as if sculpture or painting were just forcing itself into words" (380). If we wanted a representative image for this kind of pastoral

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6In his later years Williams would remark how he "attempted to fuse the poetry and painting to make it the same thing" (Int 53).
Williams provides it in his essay on Marianne Moore: a "porcelain garden" (SE 124).

Williams's image of a porcelain garden emphasizes his insistence on the presence of a certain degree of artificiality in everything pastoral. One of pastoral's primary concerns has always been the attempt to define the proper relationship between what Kermode calls the "twin poles" of nature and art. Historically critics have come down on either side, but it seems to me what pastoral attempts to achieve is an ideal balancing of nature and art. The pastoral writer tries to bring art and nature into harmony without specifically aligning himself with either side. Williams's aestheticization of his local landscape reaffirms the traditional importance pastoral has placed on artifice. His grounding of pastoral in the contemporary "natural" setting (and in particular its language) will be dealt with in the next chapter.

In the case of describing an engraved cup or a painting by Breughel the presence of a certain degree of objectification or aesthetic distance is obvious. In the poem "The Hunters in the Snow", for example, the effect is given of viewing "Breughel's picture over Williams's shoulder" (Cushman 30). In Cushman's analysis the visual

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Congleton, surveying its eighteenth-century developments, concludes that pastoral as it is "generally known" is defined by its predominantly "artificial quality, in which there is a dominance of art over nature, form over matter, expression over content" (290).
experience is re-created through a poetic technique (use of enjambment and caesurae without punctuation or capitalization to help resolve the syntactic ambiguities) that "forces the reader to work at extracting meaning from the poem as the viewer must work at distinguishing detail in Breughel's painting" (30). The only problem with this argument is that it can be applied just as easily to many other poems by Williams that are not "visual" (in the same way) at all.

It has been claimed, correctly I believe, that "Williams approaches the whole world in an aesthetic light" (Sayre 144). Obviously, then, there are poems that Williams wrote that fit into this pattern which are not pastoral. It is also true that this kind of presentation can be easily criticized for being what Marinelli calls "decorative" (as opposed to "serious") pastoral. Williams's pastoral pictures, however, are not simply sylvan scenes to be hung over mantels. As we have already seen, Williams attempted to distance himself from the "lovely milkmaids of the pastorals . . . the Marie Antoinette kind of thing" (IWP 22). 8

Observe, however, the following passage from the novel *In the Money*:

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8The artificial village created by Marie Antoinette is, in fact, Marinelli's one example of what he means by "decorative pastoral".
Mangna was very pretty standing there in the sun waiting for Rosy to be driven up to her. She held a pail in one hand and the three-legged stool in the other - a nostalgic picture from a book, the pretty milkmaid of peasant memories, lovely and delicate but real enough here - for it was Mangna’s delight and her amusement to act this part - perhaps remembered from Norway when she had been a child. (305)

We notice right away the transformation of Mangna into a pastoral image - "a nostalgic picture from a book, the pretty milkmaid of peasant memories". This historical or cultural memory is also linked (in a typical pastoral manoeuvre) to her childhood memories of Norway. She is presented as self-conscious: putting on a role, acting the part of a pastoral heroine. Indeed the only thing saving Mangna from dissolving in a sentimental mist is the affirmation that all of her artificiality is somehow "real enough here".

In Chapter One I objected to the notion that Williams was an "ironic" writer. One thing that this means is that Williams does not use one level of meaning to undercut another. Such a device is contrary to one of the most profound and distinct characteristics of Williams’s poetic - that if you have "something to say" then it should be said directly so as not to blur the point. Hence his criticism of Wallace Stevens, who "seldom comes down on a statement of fact. It is always 'thirteen ways of looking at a
blackbird,' which cannot but weaken any attack" ("Comment" 65).

Many early readings of Williams's irony made use of Wallace Stevens's distinction between the poetic/sentimental and the anti-poetic/real. In Stevens's opinion, Williams has a sentimental side which he is continually "reacting" against by emphasising an anti-poetic "real" world. There are, then, two processes at work: the real is used to "fecundate" the unreal while at the same time Williams as realist wages a Laocoon-like struggle "to escape from the serpents of the unreal" (214).

Williams, however, reacted with surprising violence against Stevens's dichotomy: "I think that what Stevens said was nonsense" (Int 61).9 The reason for this is that Williams insists that we always identify the one level of meaning with the other; there is no struggle between them. We have already seen how Williams proceeds by a process of drawing attention to contrasts and then reconciling them - making the modern "equivalent" to the classic; fusing poetry and painting to make them "the same thing". The same method is at work in his treatment of the artificial/sentimental and the "real" (or poetic and anti-poetic): "It's all one to me - the anti-poetic is not something to enhance the poetic - it's all one piece" (IWWP 52). The "special" place

9"[S]omething about the very phrase anti-poetic apparently enraged him as a poet" (IWWP 52; see also SL 265).
"beyond nature" that poems occupy "is quite definitely the same as that where bricks or colored threads are handled" (SE 125). "To me the countryside was a real world but nonetheless a poetic world" (IWWP 21). It is this affirmation of pastoral's continuing presence and relevance in the modern world that is perhaps the most distinguishing feature of Williams's pastoral. Reading a copy of Dudley Pitts's translation of pastoral verse to his family in 1949 he reflects how

it seems less out of place than the present, all the present for all that it is present (CP2 207)

Similarly, in the description of Mangna there is no ironic incongruity between the pastoral role she is playing and the "real" world she is so obviously a part of. She is "less out of place than the present", for all that she is present.

Saying that the "'special' place which poems, as all works of art must occupy" is the same place as the real world is not, however, equivalent to saying they are the same thing. There is still a distinction that Williams seeks to maintain between the real world and the world of art. As we might expect, it is this world of art that Williams describes in terms of pastoral. In a useful summary of Williams's position Bram Dijkstra shows how this works:

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10Note the importance of context. When the cosmopolitan Corydon calls Phyllis "my little Milk Maid" (156) there is incongruity.
Art should be, Williams indicated in "The Neglected Artist," an "asylum," a "haven," a separate world of more perfect structures than the real world of affairs, to which the banker, the politician, the physician might repair, when necessary, "to refresh and engage their minds and emotions." Williams tried to reassure us that this curious world of rest and recuperation for the professional classes was not a "bland Elysium," but there is little in what he says to make us believe otherwise. (Dijkstra "Introduction" 15)

The experience of this other, idyllic world is the goal of Williams's quest for rigor of beauty. Beauty is not to be pursued like a dog chasing after rabbits, but created through a response to the local environment that recognizes in it all of the essential forms of art.

Congleton defines the twin dangers of pastoral as sentimentality and primitivism. As we might expect, this aspect of Williams's pastoral, the aestheticization of reality through its invocation of the visual arts, is going to tend towards sentimentality (what we have already seen happening in the description of Mangna). In other words, this is the danger of art. But what is it about pastoral that makes it especially vulnerable to such a threat?

No doubt part of the attraction between pastoral and the visual arts lies in the idea of pastoral "stasis". We may observe that this has a double meaning. On one level pastoral stasis can be taken as referring to the unchanging equilibrium of pastoral's "middle landscape" - a balance left unaffected by historical forces. On a more technical
level we can say that in pastoral literature narrative, and even action itself, is subordinate to observation and dialogue. The natural form for pastoral writing to take is that of lyric (or imagistic) verse. Ruhe provides an interesting analysis:

The term idyl derives from idyllion, a "small framed picture" as many English dictionaries have defined it. Nothing like interesting drama can transpire in this restricted space, indeed the usual musical offering and its modest preliminaries (discourse, narrative, mime) partake almost, but not quite, of immobility. The minimal character delineation and the always simple definition of any conflict between its shepherds further block the development of dramatic action. (116)\(^\text{11}\)

This static, pictorial quality of pastoral writing fits comfortably with Williams's imagistic tendencies, his belief that "All poems can be represented by/ still lifes" (CP2 378). Even in a scene containing movement what we are presented with is really a kind of tableau - as in the dance that Mr. Paterson discovers on the "picturesque summit" of Mt. Garret in Book II. Indeed, in the original manuscript version of this passage Williams felt he had to be explicit

\(^{11}\)In his chapter on "Pastoralism and the Dramatic" Lynen explains how, because pastoral characters are representative of a typical unchanging way of life, "the relationship between them must be static" (119). We should be reminded also of Symonds remark about approaching the Idylls of Theocritus "as the bas-reliefs and vases of Greek art, in which dramatic action is presented at one moment of its evolution, and beautiful forms are grouped together with such simplicity as to need but little story to enhance their value" (474).
in reminding the reader that this was "Not a painting/ but living" (qtd. Sankey 86).

In his essay on Wordworth's Michael Richard Lessa describes the "dynamic of pastoral" as a "tension between what we might call centripetal and centrifugal forces" (186). It seems clear from his analysis that centripetal forces are associated with art and are most frequently manifested in images of circularity, enclosure, containment and inviolability, pulling towards a "still centre point" removed from variations in time and space. The sheepfold is connected in this way to such other centripetal pastoral images as Marlowe's valleys, groves, "buckles of the purest gold", "coral clasps" and "belt of straw and ivory buds". Lessa concludes that at the end of Michael we are left with an elegaic comment on the "stasis to which centripetal impulses of the pastoral aspire" (192).

In Williams's poetry images of pastoral enclosure abound,\(^\text{12}\) and in the Introduction I drew an analogy between such enclosures and the womb. Circular enclosures, of course, draw special attention to the eternal quality of centripetal pastoral. The timeless or eternal has about it a quality of stasis, even if merely in the sense of

\(^{12}\text{Manuscript evidence shows Mary's dance in Paterson Book I taking place within an "enclosed bay" (qtd. Sankey 86), and in the published version there is still a reference to "partly closed in/ dens of sweet grasses" (56) among the "fenced-in acres" (54) of the park. Two examples we will be looking at later are the circular fence that contains the Unicorn and the clearing "cinctured" by trees in "A Unison".}
permanence. As pastoral has at least a theoretical claim to being what Pope called "the most ancient sort of poetry" (57), its continuing presence is often invoked by Williams as a symbol of constancy. Evans, standing "among fauns and shepherds" (i.e., statues of fauns and shepherds) in Notre Dame, thrills at their power "to go on, to go on undefeated" (VP 51). In a significant exercise of the pastoral imagination Phyllis draws Corydon's attention to:

the three rocks tapering off into the water .
all that's left of the elemental, the primitive
in this environment. I call them my sheep .
(P 152)

Within this context we might think of the use Williams puts a conventional pastoral figure to in the poem "Autumn":

A stand of people
by an open
grate underneath
the heavy leaves
celebrates
the cut and fill
for the new road
where
an old man
on his knees
reaps a basket-
ful of
matted grasses for
his goats (CP1 449)

The distinction made is between the modern, progressive world of the "new road" and the eternal action of the "old man". The "cut and fill" is transformed metaphorically into
the "open grave" waiting at the end of most industrial notions of progress. The title, however, alerts us to the fact that the sense of death surrounding the poem is only part of a larger cycle. The old man is understood to be the true representative of "Autumn": partially abstracted into a Father Time-like figure (reaping the grass) sharing a quasi-religious relationship with nature ("on his knees").

As noted, for Williams the persistence of pastoral as a literary mode is itself emblematic of constancy. This, in turn, tells us something about the value he finds in a pastoral tradition. "Few things, when discovered, have been recognized with greater gladness by man than persistency, solidity, permanency, that which through change stays unchanged" (EK 170). An appreciation of Williams's understanding of the virtue of constancy is thus essential to our larger discussion.

In "Autumn" we can see Williams again drawing the relationship between pastoral life and the mature perspective provided by age. Such a connection is also made explicit in his discussion of constancy in The Embodiment of Knowledge, where he contrasts "the steadfastness of age and volatility of youth" (171). Ultimately, as in "Autumn", I think we can see age, like the old man in "Sailing to Byzantium" being transformed into something like the
"artifice of eternity". This same awareness of both age and eternity is present in the vision of Mary's dance: "This is the old, the very old, old upon old,/ the undying" (P 57).

Let us look at another poem making the same kind of use of what can be considered stock pastoral imagery. The poem "The High Bridge above the Tagus River at Toledo" tells of how, while "on the high bridge over the Tagus" (itself an image of the poet's elevation above the sphere of temporality) a "young man" is surprised by a shepherd bringing his flock to the city. Mariani notes (while alluding to the same passage from Paterson to which we have been returning) that the actual experience was, for Williams, "his quintessential experience of the truly primitive, the old upon old" (89). It was a moment resounding in "constancy": "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" (A 123).

What sets such an experience apart from Wordsworth's tranquil recollection of the daffodils is the further removal Williams makes from the event to the work of art - in this case, the poem:

In old age they walk in the old man's dreams and still walk

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11For Monroe Spears, Yeats's Byzantium is "itself a pastoral symbol, an aesthete's paradise" (75).
in his dreams, peacefully continuing in his verse forever. (CP2 424)

Again we have the "old man" figure removed from the world of experience to a world of art - the world of the dream. While the man may age, the pastoral moment will continue in verse "forever".

Wordsworth's "emotion recollected in tranquility" is suggestive of the reflective distance that the pastoral attitude cultivates. The removal from the actual event allows the tone of relaxed ease that characterizes Williams's pastoral to dominate. (Memory is almost always involved at some point in Williams's idylls.) This, in turn, allows for the introduction of Williams's quiet pastoral style, with all its rhythmical evocation of a descent from intensity into silence.

At this point we should be able to make some further generalizations about Williams's use of pastoral. In Chapter One I described Gurlie's surprise at finding sheep in Central Park as being a reaction to the intrusion of the garden into the world of the machine. The language was meant to recall Leo Marx's defining moment of American pastoral: the eruption of a locomotive into the world of the garden. "For it is industrialization, represented by images of machine technology, that provides the counterforce in the American archetype of the pastoral design" (Marx 26).

In this sense, at least, Williams can be seen as writing a kind of "inverted pastoral". In "The High Bridge
above the Tagus River at Toledo" Marx's disruptive incursion of the machine is turned completely inside out. Instead of the quiet meditation of Sleepy Hollow or Walden Pond being destroyed by the scream of a locomotive, the meditative moment itself is brought about by a pastoral interruption.

For Williams, pastoral moments often come as a kind of surprise, revelation or quiet recognition. We saw this earlier in the "astonishment" of the poet in "Pastoral" and Gurlie's surprised reaction to the sheep in Central Park. We also find it in Mr. Paterson's discovery of the dance on the top of Garret Mountain and Williams's strange detour through "The Forgotten City". The point seems to be that pastoral visions, like Wordsworth's spots of time, reveal themselves independently to the observer and are not to be actively pursued or deliberately cultivated. We arrive at the pastoral world only by a process of indirection, a wandering from the parkways to the suburban "back streets".

Earlier we observed that pastoral's sense of being removed from time is shared by the work of art that, like the decorated urn Keats turns about in his hands, occupies a position above passion and mortality. Sticking with Keats, we might say that this aspect of pastoral has something about it that humanity finds "cold". It is the objective presentation of reality that transforms nature into landscape and empathy into aesthetic response. Annabel Patterson uses the transfigured shepherd passage from The
Prelude to illustrate how pastoral "finally elides the question of what the shepherd really feels, by literally objectifying him, turning him into an aesthetic object, which can only be perceived externally" (282). Changing our terms of reference to Williams we would call this "dry beauty" (P 126). This is the product of an objective imagination - one that views a universe of "things" (cold and indifferent in themselves) with detached neutrality. Thus Breughel is praised because he

saw it
from the two sides: the imagination must be served - and he served dispassionately (P 225).

For Rosenmeyer, it is possible to distinguish a single distinctive and unique pastoral mood: detachment (15). We have seen how this mood plays itself out in two different ways. First of all there is the detachment of the work of art. We related this to Lessa's centripetal pastoral - poetry that pulls within itself and establishes a distance between itself and a hostile outside world. This kind of pastoral suggests images of barriers and walls, and recalls the inviolability of the womb (cf. Fig. 1). The other sort of detachment we looked at is that of the poet from his experience (the emotion recollected in tranquility). Paterson Book V, which occupies a semi-detached position as a coda to the four-book structure, brings both these idea together as it is both a Book of Art and a Book of Memory.
Detachment is also something that can take place on the level of personality. We have already seen this as fundamental to Williams's pastoral - the separation between the poet (shepherd) and the doctor. What this would seem to suggest is a removal of personal identity from the pastoral world. In Paterson Book V the feeling we have of this is very strong, as both poet and place appear to be fading from the picture. As the poem becomes more abstract and general, as well as more pastoral in its tone, it also becomes more anonymous. Such cultivation of anonymity can be seen in Williams's assertion that his explicitly pastoral "feeling of identity with nature" is "not assertive" but rather self-effacing: "I have always believed in keeping myself out of the picture" (IWWP 21). Admittedly, there is a tension in such cases between self-effacement and playful egotism.¹⁴ "Anonymity" is a word that should, in any event be qualified. Williams is often present in his pastorals in disguise.¹⁵ It is in this way that "Pastorals and Self-Portraits" (the title of an early collection of poems) go together for Williams. As we saw in the Introduction, the shepherd persona was essentially synonymous for him with that of the artist. It follows that any self-portrait is

¹⁴"Why even speak of 'I,'" he dreams, which/ interests me almost not at all?" (P 18).

¹⁵Making him part of the long tradition of pastoral writers who have concealed themselves behind a rustic persona: Theocritus/Simichidas; Sidney/Philisides; Spenser/Colin Clout (to name a few).
going to have certain pastoral qualities. We may note how he refers to a painting by Breughel that is neither of a pastoral figure nor a self-portrait as being both in a poem originally entitled "The Old Shepherd" (CP2 504). The same holds true for satyrs as shepherds. They are both pastoral disguises Williams would adopt when taking on his artistic persona. "The poet transforms himself into a satyr . . . " (I 60) he explains in one of his Improvisations. Mariani even observes that Williams gave himself what look suspiciously like faun’s ears in an early self-portrait (119).

Even when pastoral does break out of its picturesque prison and deals with sequence it tends to do so in a formalistic way that identifies individual moments with the eternal. In particular we can think of the seasonal motif employed, for example, in Pope’s Pastorals and Spenser’s Calender, where the "inexorable repetitiveness inherent in the calendar design is . . . a reflection of the pastoral stasis" (Cain 4). Something of the same relationship can also be seen in the "four threes of herdsmen" who perform the "dance of twelve Satyrs" at the sheep-shearing festival in The Winter’s Tale.

A dance of satyrs meant to represent the passage of the seasons brings us back to our discussion of Williams’s pastoral. The five-book Paterson, after all, begins with the line "spring, summer, fall and the sea" (2) and ends
with an invitation to dance "Satyrically" (236).

Connections like this, between Williams and the long tradition of pastoral literature ("Rough Satyrs danc'd" in "Lycidas"), are not as forced as they may seem at first.

"Under the Greenwood Tree", for example, is a song in Shakespeare's most explicit treatment of the pastoral theme: As You Like It.\(^{16}\) It is also the title of Thomas Hardy's first truly pastoral novel (subtitled A Rural Painting of the Dutch School). Hardy's novel is divided into four main sections named after the seasons - Winter through Autumn. Finally, "Under the Greenwood Tree" is also the name of a short story by Williams, describing how the reclusive Jack O'Brien lives in a run-down shack in the woods, "Winter and Summer" for twenty years, "rid[ing] evenly over the times" (231).

\(^{16}\) "I loved the songs in As You Like It . . . " (IWNP 10). In fact this seems to have been Williams's favourite Shakespearean play. In the Autobiography he recalls (not once, but twice) how, as a young man, he sneaked into a performance being held in the Botanical Gardens that he couldn't afford. Another song, "Blow, blow, thou winter wind" finds its way into Paterson Book V: "Sing hey the green holly" (230).
For Williams, then, as for many writers of pastoral, the seasonal cycle takes on great importance. We have already seen how it is used to evoke the notion of pastoral constancy. On a more fundamental level we might consider it obvious that a form of writing concerned with the simplicity of rural life will necessarily have a special relationship to one of the elementary characteristics of the natural world: "the wonder of continuous revival,/ the ritual of the farm" (CP2 110). Reduced to this most basic level, a writer's use of the seasonal motif is going inevitably to take on the mythic character of death and rebirth.

Williams's use of a seasonal myth has largely been examined in the context of his modern variations on the Persephone story. Much less attention has been given to his equally significant Adonis figures (the male counterpart to Kore). Adonis, the shepherd boy who becomes the dying and reviving god of early fertility cults, enters into pastoral

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17 The temptation to see a seasonal correspondence in the original four-book structure of Paterson is hard to resist (and is in fact taken for granted by most early critics of the poem), but seems to me to be ultimately insupportable. However, while I disagree with any reading of the poem that makes such a connection explicit, it does seem fair to assume that the seasonal cycle may have some general structural significance (cf. SL 333 as well as early manuscript outlines). Mariani also notes that the 52 poems in Al Que Quiere! (or, we might add, the 52 stories collected in The Farmers' Daughters) match the 52 chants in Leaves of Grass and the 52 weeks in the year (Mariani 145). Again, seen generally this may be of some significance, but it defies particular analysis.

18 Such a primary relation can also be seen in Breughel's paintings of the seasons - an obvious influence.
largely by way of the elegy. As Frye notes, the pastoral elegy "traditionally identifies its subject with Adonis" (296). In such works as "Lycidas" and, obviously, "Adonais" we see the myth being used as a symbolic representation of the seasonal cycle. In addition, one of the key elements present in such elegies, whether they take the Biblical or classical model, is the notion of translation or apotheosis, as the dead shepherd is removed to "a new and lasting bower, one that mirrors the bower below and adds further glamor to it" (Rosenmeyer 117). This new and lasting bower is an eternal Paradise lying outside of the cycles that make up the seasons' difference.

Williams's fondness for the Adonis figure is demonstrated by the casual way in which "modern replicas" of the story appear in his writing. One is not surprised to see suggestions of the myth in his portraits of De Soto - the "tireless rider, with an arrow in his thigh" (AG 54) and Sir Walter Raleigh - "the life giver through the Queen - but wounded cruelly" (AG 60). I have a feeling the myth is also somewhere behind the character of Stewie, the young Lothario who is mangled by a bull in the short story "A Descendant of Kings", and Prospero, the lame fertility figure in The Cure.

I would like to conclude this chapter by drawing together some of what has been said about pastoral and the visual arts in an examination of Williams's most extensive
beginning of Book V:

A WORLD OF ART
THAT THROUGH THE YEARS HAS
SURVIVED!
-the museum become real
The Cloisters --
on its rock (207)

This, in turn, recalls the opening of Book II: "The scene's the Park/ upon the rock" (43) - since the museum is the Edenic park taken to another level. Subtle threads connect the dance on the summit of Mt. Garret to the tapestries hanging from the walls of The Cloisters.

The first appearance of the unicorn tapestries in Paterson is, however, not in Book V but rather in the midst of the "Beautiful Thing" passage in the second section of Book III. In that passage Mr. Paterson remembers descending into a dirty basement and attending upon a latter-day Persephone figure. His mind retreats before the memory of her legs "scarred (as a child)/ by the whip" back to the library and the "dry beauty of the page" (126). Immediately he turns to the image of

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

. . . . a yelping of white hounds
-under a ceiling like that of San Lorenzo, the long painted beams, straight across, that preceded the domes and arches

\[19\]"The temple upon/ the rock" (P 22) in Book I is ambiguously identified. In Book II "the poem" is referred to as "the most perfect rock and temple" (80).
her legs "scarred (as a child)/ by the whip" back to the library and the "dry beauty of the page" (126). Immediately he turns to the image of

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

. . . . a yelping of white hounds
-under a ceiling like that of San Lorenzo, the long painted beams, straight across, that preceded the domes and arches
   more primitive, square edged

. a docile queen, not bothered
to stick her tongue out at the moon, indifferent, through loss, but .

   queenly,
in bad luck, the luck of the stars, the black stars

. the night of a mine

Dear heart
   It's all for you, my dove, my changeling (126)

The "changeling" is the Beautiful Thing, who is transformed imaginatively from the woman in the basement to the "docile queen" of the tapestry (another "indifferent" creation). It is a movement of abstraction - from the concrete "mud" and "dirt" of the basement scene to a role as "solitary object and sublime". We find the note of sublimity expressed in the lifting up of the mind from the basement with "my eye level of the ground" (125) to the contemplation of the construction of the museum's ceiling. The woman has, in fact, become an image of dry beauty, a beautiful thing.
The direction of Williams's imagination is from particular to general, concrete to abstract, realistic to symbolic. This is just one of the meanings "rolling up" has in the Preface to *Paterson*:

To make a start,
out of particulars
and make them general, rolling up the sum (3).

(Note that it is a direction I am talking about - Williams is not a thinker interested in abstractions per se.) I first mentioned this tendency in Williams's thought in the Introduction, where we saw how an early emphasis on the particular is transformed into a general vagueness "approaching death" (admittedly a somewhat troubling association). This movement takes place on both the level of the individual poem and, writ large, as part of a shape that guided his entire literary career. In a statement that is of crucial importance in understanding this aspect of Williams's poetry he once remarked how "there is a tendency expressed in all the masters when their early and later works are compared to become more simple or as I believe more abstract, more general" (EK 176). One can see the process illustrated nicely in the short poem "A Negro Woman":

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carrying a bunch of marigolds
wrapped
in an old newspaper:
She carries them upright,
bareheaded,
the bulk
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of her thighs
  causing her to waddle
    as she walks
looking into
  the store window which she passes
    on her way.
What is she
  but an ambassador
    from another world
a world of pretty marigolds
  of two shades
    which she announces
not knowing what she does
other
  than walk the streets
holding the flowers upright
  as a torch
    so early in the morning. (CP2 287)

The poem begins with an exactness of description: the flowers are carried "upright", in a newspaper that is "old", by a woman who is "bareheaded". The way the woman walks is described in a similarly particular way. In the second sentence, however, we move into "another world". In this world the woman has become a symbolic "ambassador", her flowers now a "torch" - a simile that is suggestive of wider meanings that she remains unconscious of in the execution of her simple action.

I think this is essentially the same process we saw in the "changeling" Beautiful Thing, as the woman in the basement became associated with a more abstract, almost apotheosized image. Like the Beautiful Thing, the Negro Woman is an object (for Williams, a word usually synonymous with "symbol"); unaware, of course, of her own mythic implications. Another example, and one which can be directly related to Williams's pastoral, can be seen in
"Asphodel". In Part III of that poem Williams describes a man that he encounters in the subway with extreme precision, observing in depth all of the minutiae of dress:

He was slight of build
but robust enough
had on
a double-breasted black coat
and a vest
which showed at the neck
the edge of a heavy and very dirty undershirt.
His trousers
were striped
and a lively
reddish brown. His shoes
which were good
if somewhat worn
had been recently polished.
His brown socks
were about his ankles.
In his breast pocket
he carried
a gold fountain pen
and a mechanical pencil. (CP2 328)

Just as Williams recognizes this to be his father, the man leaves. Immediately Williams sets to work transforming him into an abstract symbol, in this case a flower. To be even more specific, the "flower" Williams is thinking of is one of those "whose savor had been lost" (329), and can now only be recaptured in art:

It was a flower
some exotic orchid
that Herman Melville had admired
in the
Hawaiian jungle.
Or the lilacs
of men who left their marks,
by torchlight,
rituals of the hunt,
on the walls
of prehistoric
A movement has occurred in a number of different directions. Most obviously we are sliding from the individual to the universal:

from what came to me
in a subway train
I build a picture
of all men. (330)

It is only through an appreciation of, and close attention to, the minute particulars that one can advance to this level of generalization.

The other movements that are taking place, however, are even more interesting. Throughout "Asphodel", and clearly in this passage, we follow the drift of Williams's consciousness as it finds relationships between swiftly juxtaposed thoughts and images. In this way we move in space, from the subway car to one of Melville's tropical isles. (In a similar jump of thought Yeats transports himself from the pavement and roadways grey to the Lake Isle of Innisfree.) We also travel back in time to the very beginnings of art: the cave drawings found in the Pyrenees. In fact, we may be moving even further back in time, to a prehistorical moment, for Williams's father is also a kind of Adam (the name Williams gave to another poem about him), someone who carries "all men/ and all women too . . . in his loins" (329). All of these movements can be seen as transforming an event into art - taking us from the
experience in the subway to Melville's isles, the cave
drawings in the Pyrenees, and the "picture of all men".

This complex progression is also what is happening on a
large scale in Paterson, as we step outside the four-book
structure to the coda provided by Book V - which is also a
kind of "Book of Art".\textsuperscript{20} As we saw in the Introduction,
"Approaching death" one loses one's sense of "distinctions"
and "particulars", making all appear "as if seen/ wavering
through water". In Book V this movement is expressed in
terms of a withdrawal into the final retirement of art
(sailing to a pastoral Byzantium). The dynamics of the
larger work complete, the hero retires, leaving "the theatre
and the agora, to cultivate, like Candide, [his] own garden"
(Poggioli 4). Mr. Paterson, in Book V, has "grown older":
"living and writing . . . and tending his flower/ garden,
cutting his grass . . . " (227). And as he is "approaching/
death he is possessed by many poems" (228).

Having said this it will be obvious how appropriate
Williams's use of the unicorn tapestries, and in particular
the seventh panel, really is. In Book V Williams steps out
of the temporality of Books I through IV and into what
Mariani likes to refer to as an "eighth day of creation".
Williamson's commentary on the tapestries is entirely
apposite:

\textsuperscript{20}Connaroe notes how, in \textit{Paterson}, "the underlying
direction" is from specific particulars to universals
associated with the "Higher Laws" of art (111).
The seventh panel of the Unicorn Tapestries is not part of the actual hunt of the unicorn, but rather the apotheosis of the hunt, in which the resurrected unicorn symbolizes the rebirth of Christian and pre-Christian vegetation gods. This tapestry is an epigram or coda to the yearly cycle, mirroring the death and ultimate resurrection of the fecund seasons, and the sexual powers of plants and animals - a reflection of heavenly perfection, where there is perpetual springtime, abundance, and an absence of malign forces. (199-200)

The jewelled collar is a typical pastoral image of circularity and containment, and the circular wooden fence is the perfect pastoral enclosure - the ultimate expression of pastoral's "centripetal impulses".21 If we want to call it confinement we must call it a pastoral confinement, one which emphasizes meditative withdrawal, seclusion and inviolability. "[I]t must be said of a life of confinement . . . that much of the world's greatest writing has waited on a removal from the world of affairs for its doing. Concentration is what a man needs to bring his mind to harvest" (A 343, emphasis added).

This emphasis on confinement recalls what I had to say about the language of containment used in the Preface to Paterson. In that case confinement was associated with pregnancy and the womb. We may be able to expand on this connection now. In doing so we might compare Williams's

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21 Compare the circular walls of the egg besieged by a host of sperm in Fig. 1.
penned unicorn with the Garden of Adonis described in Book III of the *Faerie Queene*.

In Spenser, the Garden of Adonis is a pastoral paradise that is likened to the womb - "the first seminarie/ Of all things, that are borne to live and die" (360). "A thousand thousand naked babes" (361) attend upon their sending forth into the world of mortality. Although subject to the decay of time, within the Garden Adonis is "eterne in mutabilitie", living in "eternall blis" and "euerlasting ioy" (364). Like the Unicorn, Adonis exists in a state just outside the cycle of life - literally after death and before birth. The Garden is a paradise but also a place of confinement, where Adonis, like the Unicorn, is "emprisoned for ay" (364). Finally, beneath the Garden lies another, greater womb - the "wide wombe of the world" (361) that Spenser identifies as Chaos. It is this Chaos that supplies the Garden with the substances that Adonis then transforms into nature's forms. Chaos itself, of course, is not pastoral at all (it is described as a "hatefull darkenesse" and "deepe horrore"), but it is a necessary pre-condition for pastoral's flourishing, providing the soil from which the Garden springs.\(^\text{22}\)

As we have seen, the womb is related to pastoral in various thematic ways: it is a place where innocence is

\(^{\text{22}}\)It seems to me that Williams has the same idea in mind when he speaks of the swampy "fetid womb" (170) of the world in *Paterson* Book IV.
protected and contained; of both naturalness and unity. The womb as we have been looking at it in this chapter can be particularized as the womb of art - a place like those "prehistoric caves in the Pyrenees" Williams imagines in the passage we looked at earlier from "Asphodel". In fact, keeping that poem in mind, we might see now how the Adamic figure of Williams's father, carrying all men and women about in his loins, corresponds to Adonis as the father of all forms and the captive Unicorn.

The Unicorn's captivity is finally, and perhaps most significantly, representative of the apotheosis of art and the imagination over the world of nature, a gathering into the "artifice of eternity". The porcelain garden, what Williams called "a treasure of seclusion", the "mythical, indestructible garden of pleasure" (SE 124) (recalling the park "devoted to pleasure" in Paterson Book II) is realized in the eternal springtime of the imagination.

Within such a garden, as within Blake's Jerusalem, distinctions co-exist within a single comprehensive symbol. The minute particulars are all there to be named, even catalogued:

slippered flowers

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23This notion of apotheosis is supported by Williams's original title for "Asphodel" (which was at one point supposed to be Paterson Book V): *The River of Heaven*. Presumably the Passaic was supposed to have undergone some kind of apotheosis after finishing its run to the sea: "I had to take the spirit of the River up in the air" (qtd. Thirlwall, "Genesis" 70).
crimson and white,  
balanced to hang  
on slender bracts, cups evenly arranged upon a stem,  
foxglove, the eglantine  
or wild rose,  
pink as a lady's ear lobe when it shows  
beneath the hair,  
campanella, blue and purple tufts  
small as forget-me-not among the leaves.  
Yellow centers, crimson petals  
and the reverse,  
dandelion, love-in-a-mist,  
cornflowers,  
thistle and others  
the names and perfumes I do not know. (232-233)

As in the New World "garden" of Father Rasles, "Nothing  
shall be ignored. All shall be included" (IAG 120). This  
is not the dissolving sea, where identity is broken down  
like the decomposing body of the Hindu princess, but rather  
the sea of art - a "formal design" (the title Williams gave  
to a short poem on the Unicorn tapestries) where the chaos  
of nature is given its eternal form, both general and  
specific.24

Put another way, this is not annihilation but  
transcendence, and for Williams it takes place within the  
pastoral order of the garden. The unicorn is enclosed  
within a garden, the New World is a garden for Father  
Rasles, and the

24A number of critics have commented on this special  
quality of the end of Book V. Breslin describes the way the  
tapestries "combine painstaking devotion to detail with an  
awareness of archetypal patterns in a way that makes them an  
ideal union of the literal and the mythical" (207). Martz  
makes an almost identical observation, calling the  
tapestries "a peculiar combination of the local and the  
mythical" (156).
sea
which no one tends
is also a garden
when the sun strikes it
and the waves
are wakened. (CP2 313)

The garden is Williams's "one symbol" of natural yet formal order, a pastoral paradise we are led to recognize (because we all carry with us the sense of having known innocence) imaginatively. In the modern world our perception of this order is momentary:

We start awake with a cry of recognition
but soon the outlines become again vague. (CP2 319)

But in that moment of recognition we have come home.
CHAPTER THREE
WORDS MARKED BY A PLACE

Without knowing Greek I had read translations of the *Odes of Theocritus* and felt myself very much attracted to the pastoral mode. But my feeling for the country was not as sophisticated as the pastorals with their picturesque shepherdesses. I was always a country boy, felt myself a country boy. To me the countryside was a real world but nonetheless a poetic world.

*I Wanted to Write a Poem*

In Empson's famous phrase pastoral can ultimately be defined as "putting the complex into the simple" (22). This is, of course, a bit too general to be of much use,¹ but it does help to introduce the relationship between pastoral and regionalism. It is well known that the older pastorals took place in a more or less abstract Arcadian landscape. However critics have also defined a "modern" pastoral tradition (beginning, surprisingly, with Pope) which follows a movement "from the particular to the general, from the local and realistic to the universal and symbolic" (Marinelli 55). This is, as we have already seen, the natural direction of Williams's thought, and it should come as no surprise to see his version of Arcadia fitting into such a tradition.

¹"[T]aken widely the formula might include all literature" (Empson 23). This is a trap many genre theorists have difficulty avoiding.
One aspect of regional writing is that it asks us to see a particular locality, usually a rural community, as having universal significance. In his essay on "Regionalism in American Literature" Benjamin Spencer explains how the "local" interests of early Modern American writers (such as Williams) became "transcendental rather than realistic". This new wave of local writers "did not care to paint rural manners so much as to glimpse universal truths" (244). The aim of the regional writer thus became "not to picture an unusual place, but to develop the image of the region as a world which somehow represents all other places" (Lynen 59).

"Transcendental localism" can be identified with the pattern of most modern Arcadias. This is, however, just one way in which the programs of the regional and the pastoral writer can be seen as corresponding. There are, of course, many others. Spencer, who never specifically refers to pastoral writing, still draws attention to the fact that "one raison d'etre for the genuinely regional work is that

\[^{2}\text{Spencer's study also helps to clarify what may be a confusing point of terminology. The early Modern American writers used "the term 'local' rather than 'sectional' or 'regional', though mere local color had clearly had its day" (244). This is, in fact, exactly the case with Williams, who criticized "local colour" writing but always used the term "local" to describe his own approach to regional writing. Put another way, we may think of two kinds of regional writing: simple regionalism, or "local colour" writing only seeks to provide a sentimental evocation of place, while complex regionalism makes the claim of universality (at least implicitly).}\]
it comprehends and submits the order of a community as a point of stability amid the complicated issues of the larger world" (233). This is, it seems to me, a fundamentally pastoral program. In Lynen’s analysis "regionalism is always potentially pastoral" because of this "strong sense of contrast" between a local rural world and modern industrial society (57). Now while one could hardly call Paterson, N.J. a simple rural community (either in terms of cultural homogeneity or industrial development) it was (in Williams’s phrase) "knowable" and did possess at least some kind of distinctive integrity for him.

The "knowable community" is a central construct within the pastoral tradition of the last couple of hundred years (having developed alongside the novel). It is, broadly conceived, a pastoral community. As such it has faced the typical pressures brought to bear on it from the outside world:

The growth of towns and especially of cities and a metropolis; the increasing division and complexity of labour; the altered and critical relations between and within social classes: in changes like these any assumption of a knowable community - a whole community, wholly knowable - became harder and harder to sustain. (Williams 166)

The knowable community is a place, Moynahan explains, "where the simple and the complex intertwine in the notion of a community that mediates between the inexhaustible, unregenerate energies of primary nature ["the elemental
character of the place" and the powerful abstracted orders
of general civilization" (34). Within such a form the
individual (really almost any individual) can be seen as
representative, if not the embodiment, of the entire
community. This is, of course, as Moynahan himself points
out, another way of putting the complex into the simple. It
is the relationship between local and universal at the level
of the individual and his or her community. For Williams,
this relationship is made explicit in his identification
between the man and the city: "a man in himself is a city,
beginning, seeking, achieving and concluding his life in
ways which the various aspects of a city may embody" (P
253).

Paterson was Williams's knowable community. Williams
felt that such a place as Paterson could be understood by,
and thus embodied in, one man (in contrast to New York City,
which was "too much a congeries of the entire world's facts"
(P xiii)). By implication Paterson contains a kind of order
and stands for a certain set of values that allows a
contrast to be drawn between it and the "unknowable"
complexities of a modern city like New York.

The poem "A Place (Any Place) to Transcend All Places"
(CP2 163) shows Williams's handling of this theme. As
Johnston notes, there is a "rather crude country-city
contrast" (210) drawn between its evocation of rural New
Hampshire and the modern decadence of New York City. In
particular the rootedness of a life in the country (seen also in the coolie's garden at the end of the poem) is compared to the unreality of the "hodge-podge" found in the "international city" (its subways are "of dreams" and the sweatshops and railroad yards only "seem real"). In the poem unreality is seen as a function of abstraction or abstract thinking - the kind of philosophical self-indulgence of Stevens that Williams was specifically replying to (Mariani 517). As we saw in Chapter Two, abstraction is the direction Williams's aesthetic, visual pastoral tends to move in, but it is a process that must begin with an understanding of, and attention to, the particular. Abstraction in this poem is expressive of a kind of rootlessness that makes characters such as "Poor sad/ Eliot" (hoist with his own petard) and "Elsa von Freytag Loringhofen" appear as mere cultural derelicts who "wear
their manner too obviously,"
the adopted English (white)
and many others (CP2 165).

When confronted with such a breakdown various options open up, including that of becoming a "regionalist":

Southern writers, foreign writers, hugging a distinc- tion, while perspectived behind them following the crisis (at home) peasant loyalties inspire the avant-garde. (CP2 165)

But this attitude of "hugging a distinction" is obviously no answer. If it were, "Poor/ Hoboken". Instead, the Southern
writers (living in New York) are just as artificial as the unreal Eliot. In hugging their distinctions the Southerners become mere local-colour writers failing to "develop the image of the region as a world which somehow represents all other places" (Lynen 59). This is the "simple regionalism" (cf. note 2) that Williams attributes to "Your Edgar Lee Masters, your Winesburg, Ohio" (I 196) and, in the visual arts, to the American Scene painters. In contrast, the kind of regionalist tradition we have been focusing on uses local colour merely as a springboard. Place is something ultimately to be surpassed. We may remark how there is always a tendency on the part of the "transcendental localist" to remain paradoxically indifferent to his surroundings. "[P]laces have no significance" (SL 147) Williams once wrote to Marianne Moore. "Anywhere is everywhere" (P 231).

Anywhere can be everywhere, it all depends on your relationship to your environment:

3Dijkstra gives expression to Williams's attitude towards the American Scene painters of the Thirties as "artists who simply used mechanically learned methods to express the surface eccentricities of a particular locality" ("Introduction" 8-9).

4Spencer notes how pre-Civil War New England authors interested in "glimpsing the oversoul" seldom referred to a New England literature: "hence Hawthorne's declaration that The House of the Seven Gables did not pretend to 'describe local manners,' that it had more to do 'with the clouds over head than with any portion of the actual soil of the County of Essex'" (224).
all places remain the same: all are "Paterson" to me if I make them so. Whether Hongkong or the past: their details are interchangeable, if I have the eyes for it. (qtd. Lloyd 257)

Shakespeare, someone whom Williams clearly thought did "have the eyes for it", was (that telling phrase again) a "country boy" (EK 15).² "In Shakespeare there was a certain stopped condition of mind, English and rural, which permitted him infinite elaboration and variety inside the confinement" (16).³ Here we see the theme of pastoral confinement, which we described at the end of Chapter Two, placed within a regional context. Within the boundaries of the limited and simple, complex universal truths can be expressed ("putting the complex into the simple"). Like Hardy, and Shelley before him, Williams draws the connection between this geographical confinement and the city states of ancient Greece. Pressing his argument even further, we are informed that Shakespeare was a kind of type of the modern American writer: "He, Shakespeare, occupied in relation to his world the precise position America, as a nation,

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²For an account of Shakespeare as suburbanite see CP1 208. As an aside one might note how the vagrant Prospero in The Cure tells the State Trooper that he is "John Keats" from "A farm in Indiana" (ML 390). This is all part of Williams's location of the poetic calling somewhere outside the city.

³"We live only in one place at a time but far from being bound by it, only through it do we realize our freedom. Place then ceases to be a restriction" ("The Fatal Blunder" 126).
occupies toward the classical culture of Europe or the East today" (EK 139).

Such an analogy ultimately has its roots in one of the great American myths - the New World envisioned as a natural paradise, filled with noble savages uncorrupted by European "civilization". In the Renaissance, as Leo Marx points out, "the distinction between primitive and pastoral styles of life is often blurred" (39): "In many ways the stock figure of the Noble Savage, which now became immensely popular, resembles the good shepherd of the old pastorals" (101). Locating pastoral among savages (however noble they may turn out to be), while not alien to the tradition, is obviously taking it in a very different direction than we saw in the last chapter. Speaking in terms of direction may be instructive. We have already seen how pastoral can be taken both inward (Lessa's centripetal impulse towards images of stasis, enclosure and confinement) and upward (what I called the apotheosis of art). What we still have to examine is pastoral's corresponding tendency to move downward, into a closer contact with the native ground. "The descent beckons/ as the ascent beckoned" (P 78).

Put another way, in Chapter Two I referred to Congleton's two dangers that threaten pastoral writing: sentimentalism and primitivism. We saw then that sentimentalism could be considered the danger of art, or the over-aesthetisization of reality. I think we can balance
this analysis now by looking at Williams's primitivism, or the danger of nature.

The view of America as a primitive pastoral garden and its native inhabitants as latter-day shepherds is given a good deal of play in In the American Grain. A few selections from its descriptions of the New World environment will demonstrate the physical side of the myth:

Bright green trees, the whole land so green that it is a pleasure to look on it. Gardens of the most beautiful trees I ever saw. (26, Columbus)

It was a paradise. A stream of splashing water, the luxuriant foliage. A gorge, a veritable tunnel led upstream between cliffwalls covered by thick vines in flower attended by ensanguined hummingbirds which darted about from cup to cup in the green light. (40, Ponce de Leon)

Shoal water where we smelt so sweet and so strong a smell, as if we had been in the midst of some delicate garden... a land so full of grapes as the very beating and surge of the sea overflow them, such plenty, as well there as in all places else, on the sand and on the green soil on the hills, as well as every little shrub, as also climbing towards the tops of the high cedars, that in all the world I think a like abundance is not to be found. (61-62, Raleigh)

In turn, the native population of this New Eden is described as correspondingly idyllic - "Rousseau has it" (44). Indeed, it has been said that Williams "is determined

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7 In his analysis of Williams's historical project Rapp describes how, from "Williams' point of view, the New World was really . . . the Golden Age all over again" (44).
to have his savages noble, despite their ignoble savagery" (Holden 250). Throughout *In the American Grain* the Indians are presented as a people who share a healthy, harmonious relationship with nature. In the fiction Gurlie Stecher is one character with an imagination susceptible to such myths: "It was very lovely in that part of the park with rolling rocky land and a small stream that always made Gurlie think of the days before there was ever a city there but a romantic forest where wild beasts and Indians lived undisturbed" (*IM* 111).

Indians are, in this way, used by Williams as a kind of pastoral touchstone. Guimond's comment that in "Williams's other works the child, Negro, and the "poor" often fulfill approximately the same function that the Indian does" (26) alerts us to the various guises Williams's Arcadian "shepherd surrogates" may appear in. Often a connection between them is made explicit, most commonly when children playing are described as being like Indians. The Jackson's Whites (described in *Paterson* Book I) are a comprehensively pastoral tribe: a mixture of Indians, escaped negro slaves, 

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8Holder points out that this same view was held by many of the heroes of *In the American Grain*. He quotes, for example, Daniel Boone's judgment that "the manners and habits of the Indians were 'far more agreeable to him than those of a more civilized and refined race'" and Sam Houston's preference for "the wild liberty of the Redmen . . . [to] the tyranny of my own brothers" (Holder 248). Williams also discusses the significance of Boone and Houston in the essay "The American Background" (*SE* 140-41).
deserters and "a lot of women and their brats" who "took to the mountains" and "ran in the woods" (12).

Of course the myth of America as pastoral garden was never accepted as being literally true. As we saw in the Introduction, historical accuracy is entirely foreign to the pastoral myth. Pastoral history involves a dream of paradise lost, an idyllic world above the Falls. Being a product of the imagination (or memory, the two are interchangeable) it does not stand very much looking into. It is a human truth that "no whiteness (lost) is so white as the memory/ of whiteness" (P 78).

In fact, as Marx points out there were two conflicting Elizabethan visions of the New World - the garden and the hideous wilderness; Eden and the hellish desert (66). He adds that it "is hardly surprising that the New England Puritans favored the hideous wilderness image of the American landscape" (43). In In the American Grain Williams makes his Puritans the inheritors of this negative image while his Indians, and those who adopt their native "contact" with the environment, inhabit a Golden Age wilderness. Here we have one of the clearest expressions of Williams's belief in the individual's power to transform his environment through his imaginative response to it.

The theme of America as pastoral place is altogether too large to deal with in any depth in a thesis of this scope. As Marx points out, the conflict between art and
nature "is one of which American experience affords a
singularly vivid instance" (35). It was a conflict present
from the beginnings of European exploration and settlement.
We should note in passing, however, the general trend that
saw the noble savage replaced by Jefferson's noble
husbandman ("the good shepherd of the old pastoral dressed
in American homespun" (Marx 127)). (Myths, after all, serve
cultural purposes, and are not immutable.) In this later
variation of the myth the New World became associated with
specifically rural virtues, as opposed to the Old World's
urban corruption. Sidney H. Bremer gives an excellent
summary in his article "Exploding the Myth of Rural America
and Urban Europe":

Despite a steady increase in domestic
industrialization and urbanization, the
half-century between the War of 1812 and
the Civil War saw the development of
America's cultural identity as "Nature's Nation." Perry Miller has pointed out
that popular writers "identified the
health, the very personality of America
with Nature, and therefore set it in
opposition to the concepts of the city,
the railroad and the steamboat."
Nature, whether manifested in the
untrammelled wilderness or in productive
agricultural lands, was the touchstone
for popular conceptions of America's
uniqueness as a nation. The
identification of Nature with America,
moreover involved a corollary
identification of the City with Europe.
(49)

In many ways this contrast between rural America and
urban Europe is the primary form that pastoral writing has
taken in American literature. In his essay on "The American
Background" Williams makes use of it as he relates the history of "the abandonment of the primary effort and the further and further concentration of population at the trade centers, the cities and the steady depletion of the rural districts" (SE 150). The primary effort refers to a culture that is attached to the "essential reality" of its environment. The primary impetus finds "the elementary principle of all art, in the local conditions" (A 146). In contrast to this distinctly rural quality, the "unrelated element" or "would-be universal culture" (149) is "represented by the cities along the seaboard" (145). The Jeffersonian ideal, symbolized by Monticello's fusion of cultures, is betrayed by this specifically urban "rule of wealth" and "purchased culture".

The usual response to such a rural-centric scale of values is to brand it as provincialism. As we might expect, however, this was not a title Williams as pastoralist was ashamed of or sought to avoid. Provincialism itself has been with pastoral since its beginnings. Wells, for example, describes Theocritus as being "more at ease when he stands at some distance from the centre" (21). When, in Idyll 15, he presents the teeming crowds of the "big city" (Alexandria) he does so through the eyes of two Syracusan women who are criticised at one point for talking like hicks. The pastoral idylls, in turn, are almost all set in Sicily, a Dorian colony referred to by Lattimore as "the
America of [its] day" (3). Williams empathised with this poetry of the classical perimeter and the concomitant role of provincial outsider: "I like to think of the Greeks as setting out for the colonies in Sicily and the Italian peninsula . . . setting their backs to Athens" (I 12). And so Mr. Paterson:

he envies the men that ran
and could run off
toward the peripheries (P 35)

"Do you think I like to practice medicine here in Rutherford, and see others skipping over the face of the globe from the two poles to London, New York, Hoboken and Pekin?" he wrote Viola Baxter in 1914. "I am here for one clear reason and that is that I cannot see how I can be anywhere else and do what I have determined to do" ("Letters" 56).

The most important aspect of Williams's staying at home was the way it gave him what can be called the pastoral perspective.

The pastoral genre can best be defined as a particular synthesis of attitudes toward the rural world. One might call this a point of view . . . Pastoral comes to life whenever the poet is able to adopt its special point of view - whenever he casts himself in the role of the country dweller and writes about

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9One can see a broadly similar action in Williams's descriptions of Evans (VP 282), Poe (AG 226), Whitman (P xiv)/the man rising out of the sea at the end of Paterson IV (P 202) and even the painter Marsden Hartley (RI 153). Such figures "turn their backs" upon "the pull of longing toward a lost culture" (Martz 153).
life in terms of the contrast between the rural world, with its rustic scenery and naive, humble folk, and the great outer world of the powerful, the wealthy and the sophisticated. (Lynen 9, emphasis added)

In casting himself in the role of the country dweller ("I was always a country boy") Williams adopts an unsophisticated attitude of "wonder" (Tanner) or "honest simplicity" (Kallet). At times, in fact, he seems almost to be cultivating the Romantic persona of wise fool ("I have always been amazed at the authenticity with which the simple-minded often face [the] world ..." (A 357)).

Again, one doesn't have to accept this as an accurate description of Williams's character any more than we should think that he actually went out into the woods to write poetry. What Williams is doing is playing a part, in this case that of the rustic clown.

Above all, however, the pastoralist is an outsider: someone keeping an eye on the town but from a distance. Johnston perhaps overstates the general point: "Williams emerges as the first major writer since Wordsworth who, rooted elsewhere, contemplates the city from the moral and physical vantage point of the country - or at least from a vantage point that is not the city itself" (204, emphasis in the original).

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10 The innocence he professes so frequently in the Autobiography can be seen as part of the same pattern.
It is natural to find a note of superiority entering into the voice of someone speaking from the pastoral perspective, and Paterson’s first words alert us to "a local pride" (2). Now if we are thinking strictly in terms of pastoral the word "pride" may throw us, as pastoral figures are supposedly models of humility. The conventional interpretation of the shepherd’s homely lot and its correspondent pride is provided by Fawnia in Greene’s Pandosto:

> Our toil is in shifting the folds and looking to the lambs: easy labours; oft singing and telling tales: homely pleasures. Our greatest wealth not to covet, our honour not to climb, our quiet not to care. Envy looketh not so low as shepherds; shepherds gaze not so high as ambition; we are rich in that we are poor with content, and proud only in this: that we have no cause to be proud. (184)

It follows that when her lover, the young Prince Dorastus offers to remove her from her father’s cottage to the luxury of the court her answer is to simply say that it would be better for Dorastus to become a shepherd. We can see there is a long tradition of pastoral pride and self-assertiveness behind Frost’s simple resolution: "I choose to be a plain New Hampshire farmer" (172).

Pastoral humility is, in fact, a dubious virtue. Empson calls it an "often absurdly artificial" (13) convention, "a false pretence . . . designed only to give strength" (59). This is because the shepherd is used to
symbolise so much more than a life of extreme simplicity. Indeed the heroic convention was often "piled onto the pastoral one, since the hero was another symbol of his whole society" (Empson 12).

On a more basic level we would have to agree that many instances of pastoral humility (particularly in the Renaissance) are patently disingenuous, since the shepherd or shepherdess is really nobility in disguise (as is the case with Fawnia, for example). Such a trick is in fact at least as old as Paris. Kermode links characters like this to the "myth of the royal child (to the Christian, the type of Christ), cast away or exiled in infancy, who 'receives the ministrations of shepherds, and is reared by a foster-father of humble birth'" (20). Such a figure may seem artificially paradoxical (critics have not been kind to the "majestic" old man from the poem "Pastoral"), but Williams often returns to the idea as having a kind of theoretical integrity.

The section in Paterson dealing with the historical origins of the Jackson’s Whites is worth a closer look. It begins (significantly in Williams’s own prose) as follows:

If there was not beauty, there was a strangeness and a bold association of wild and cultured life grew up together in the Ramapos: two phases. (12)

Sankey very usefully identifies the "two phases" of "wild and cultured life" (note the "bold association" of the
What he describes are two different forms of the pastoral ideal:

(a) the primitive setting - the forest of butternut, elm and so on, a river in which trout slithered "among shallow stones," and (b) the aristocratic beauty of a colonial estate, "lovely Ringwood," with "its velvet lawns," a beauty reminiscent of Old World culture. (41)

It is characteristic of Williams’s pastoral, I have been arguing, to attempt to reconcile these "two phases": to make the savage noble and the primitive aristocratic. In his unpublished Introduction to his short stories, for example, Williams’s makes reference to the "half wild primitive" race of Jackson’s Whites (the pastoral tribe) as forming their "own bizarre aristocracy" (15).

Further evidence of this same "trick of thought" is not hard to find. In Voyage to Pagany Grace Black explains to Evans that "There’s a good deal of peasant in you, as in all true aristocrats who are attached to the land" (277). Indeed it is this idea that first attracts Gurlie to the town of Riverdale:

On their trips to see the house Gurlie had the man drive them around to see the lay of the land. It was a pretty place, so near New York and very respectable - even showing some evidence of wealth in a restrained sort of way. Or was it the veritable castle, as it was called, which had arrested Gurlie’s gaze and her thoughts? It capped the hill in the new part of town, formerly a pine grove with an old nondescript stone mansion in the center, a transformation at the cost of
a million dollars or more into a positive mediaeval French chateau. A six-foot iron picket fence surrounded its lawns and gardens. It was indeed impressive.

But the real center of the town still was a farm, where a descendant of the original Dutch grantee, a bachelor, tilled his rye, corn and potato fields, living in his colonial farmstead, rather primitive, but with a huge wisteria vine twisted about its latticed well house. He still had his old wood lot, limited though it was by the small newly built houses on the recently cut through streets . . .

Gurlie admired the farm and the castle. "They must have money," she said. "What they should do is to combine those two places, the farm and the castle. Do the same people own them?" she asked the hack driver.

"No, they got nothing to do with each other." (BU 59-60)

Gurlie's sense that somehow it must be possible to "combine those two places, the farm and the castle" shows once again how naturally in tune she seems to be with traditional pastoral sentiments - in this case the idea of the aristocratic or noble husbandman.

We can see this as another example of Williams's method of equivalency, his tendency to make all things "of a piece" with the imagination. Unfortunately such a process can also become associated with the theory of natural aristocracy and the kind of cultural xenophobia one finds, for example, in Eliot's more infamous writings. To a certain extent this prejudice is inherent in the pastoral mode. This is largely because of two additional factors at work: the organicism of the pastoral community (its "knowability") and the
consequent suspicion it has of outsiders (i.e., intruders).\textsuperscript{11}

Virginia is described by Eliot as a much better place "for the re-establishment of a native culture" than New England because "you are further away from New York; you have been less industrialised and less invaded by foreign races; and you have a more opulent soil" \textit{(After Strange Gods 16)}. The establishment of a native culture, distance from New York, and contact with the "soil" are, as we have already seen, all important elements in Williams's own brand of pastoral regionalism. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the concern over invasion by foreign races is also, at least implicitly, present. That this should be the case with a writer Pound referred to as a "blooming foreigner"\textit{(SE 8)}, who lived and worked within a largely immigrant community, is evidence of the strength of such a myth. Williams always attempted to conceal his obvious similarities with Eliot beneath a torrent of abuse but, as Robert Lowell perceptively noted in a comment relevant to the present discussion, "Williams had much in common with Catholic, aristocratic and Agrarian writers" \textit{(Lowell 161-62)}.

The dangers involved in racist expressions of local pride are inherent in Williams's belief in the virtue of a.

\textsuperscript{11}I am hardly the first to have noticed this. Moynahan, writing in 1972, comments on the "reactionary and xenophobic politics" that constitute the "less pleasant" side of the "continuing illusion of the pastoral in Britain" (20).
direct connection to one's native soil (the "burrowing pride" (CP1 63) he often refers to as "contact"). The popular stereotype of the urban jew, unattached to any specific local culture, makes him a particularly easy target. Thus, when Williams insists on localism being "the essential quality in literature" he makes a special exception for "unattached intelligence (the Jewish sphere)" (SE 32). We see the same attitudes expressed by the would-be natural aristocrat Gurlie Stecher. The following is an extract from her conversation with a Jewish woman she meets in the park:

   Why is it all your people always insist on staying in the cities? Gurlie spoke again. Why don't some of you go out in the country where there's light and air. That's what you need. You've got plenty of brainy people. I should think you'd see that.

   My brother has a store, the woman answered her conciliatingly. But Gurlie went on. You're always blaming us for doing things to you but it's your own fault. You crowd into the cities. You have no love for the land. That's what makes all the trouble. (IM 175-76).

While Gurlie's anti-semitism is hardly endorsed (throughout the trilogy Williams is sympathetic to those who have to put up with her arrogance and bigotry), it does seem to carry a certain weight. As we have already seen, Gurlie is a character oddly out of touch with her modern, urban setting, and more in tune with romantic notions of primitive cultures. For example, it is only her fear of the "dirty
minds" in her community that stops her from going out at night to stand naked under the stars "just [to] feel her skin touched by the night air" (BU 92). Simplistic distinctions are easy for her to draw: "I hate the city . . . To me a tree and a bush can talk. I love nature" (IM 219).

Another problem with being provincial is that the connotations, from the perspective of "international modernism", tend to be pejorative. How does one convert living in an "uncivilized, amputated country" (CP1 276) ("half savage" in Pound's famous phrase) into an advantage? The rural metaphors Williams chooses are hardly complimentary: Yankee "clodhoppers in verse" (SL 41), the American mind "shut in a corncrib" (SE 32). In Paterson he remembers how he used to be called a "country bumpkin" (188), but in fact it is a term he uses often enough on himself.

Williams, as so often is the case when dealing with subjects he feels passionately about, does not have a clearly formulated defence:

Paris and London aren't interested - to hell with it, this is just a province. But people live in provinces - provinces are just as much part of the world as the technique of the artist can make them live. If he cannot succeed in making them live, it's going to be provincial, but if he can make them surmount the life around them and come to more mature experiences, he will succeed in writing wherever he is. Provinces will become not provincial
when the artists are big enough to make
important contributions to those who are
remembered. If not, it's too bad.
(qtd. Thirlwall 282)

Of course, the obvious response to accusations of
provincialism from a pastoral perspective is to make the
claim of universality. As Frost puts it in "New Hampshire":

Samoa, Russia, Ireland, I complain of,
No less than England, France and Italy.
Because I wrote my novels in New Hampshire
Is no proof that I aimed them at New Hampshire.
(166)

He contends that to understand his work as applying only to
a "special state" is "to restrict my meaning". For Williams
as well the regional ethic allows "infinite elaboration and
variety inside the confinement" (EK 16) of a particular
place. "I do not deny the value of your own work," he wrote
to Ezra Pound, but "be at least courteous enough to
recognize that a man in my position is not limited by what
you so glibly call his provincialism" (Dear Ez 25).

In Chapter One I made the distinction between
plagiarism (or copying) and imitation. What this was meant
to highlight was the difference between writing that is
merely derivative (plagiarism) and writing that, while
traditional, remains vital and relevant - sharing a direct
relationship with something inherent in the human condition.
Another word Williams often uses to describe this "good"
tradition is "classic".

Williams defined the classic as "the local fully
realized, words marked by a place" (SE 132). In much the
same way D.H. Lawrence held that "classic" American literature is defined by its "spirit of place". As he wrote in his review of *In the American Grain*, "All creative art must rise out of a specific soil and flicker with a spirit of place" (Lawrence 334). These ideas are intertwined in a letter Williams wrote to his brother after seeing "Isadora Duncan in her classical dances" (qtd. Breslin 31). Williams is describing Duncan’s portrayal of classical figures, but ends a poem commemorating the experience by calling her a "country maid" who suggests to him "how soon shall spring/ From this our native land great loveliness" (qtd. Breslin 31). The classic, then, is part of a national spirit residing in the local ground that can be likened to the dance of a country maid.

Williams, perhaps more than a little defensively, never swerved from his belief that "localism alone can lead to culture" (*FD* 225):

The strongest feature of the Russian Soviets is their local character...
The old strength of Europe is its traditional localism fixed by a variety of languages

The loss of China has been that of the conglomerate...
The Renaissance was the flowering of rival cities

It is inevitable that in all things one must always know more than the rest of the world

And what he knows is bred of some place...

(qtd. Mariani 268-269)

The idea that only what is "thoroughly local in origin, has some chance of being universal in application" (*AG* 222)
was axiomatic for Williams.\textsuperscript{12} This direction of moving from the local to the universal corresponds to the movement from the particular fact to the image as symbol we saw in Chapter Two. In a letter to Horace Gregory we can see how it became the central assumption behind his plan for \textit{Paterson} ("To make a start,/ out of particulars/ and make them general" (P 3)):

> just as the city depends, literally, both for its men and its materials on the country, so general ideas, if they are to be living and valid, to some extent depend (at least for their testing) on local cultures. It is in the wide range of the local only that the general can be tested for its one unique quality, its universality. The flow must originate from the local to the general as a river to the sea and then back to the local from the sea in rain. (\textit{SL} 225)\textsuperscript{13}

It is in this way that the poet can be seen as making the provincial "live":

To make a poem, fulfilling the requirements of the art, and yet new, in the sense that in the very lay of the syllables \textit{Paterson} as \textit{Paterson} would be

\textsuperscript{12}When Eliot made a similar pronouncement in the \textit{Partisan Review} Williams was quick to point out that it was "something I have been saying for a generation" (\textit{SL} 224): "You'd think a professional bastard of the sort would make some attempt to give credit where it is due" (\textit{Let} 80).

\textsuperscript{13}And so, to \textit{Paterson}:

from mathematics to particulars -

divided as the dew, floating mists, to be rained down and regathered into a river that flows and encircles: (5)
discovered perfect, perfect in the special sense of the poem, to have it - if it rose to flutter into life awhile - it would be as itself, locally, and so like every other place in the world. For it is in that, that it be particular to its own idiom, that it lives. (A 392)

Significantly, in this last comment Williams relates the local to a particular use of language, or "idiom". For this reason writing that is "provincial in the worst sense" (plagiarism in our earlier model) means writing "wholly derivative and dependent upon nothing that [can] possibly give it authenticity" (i.e., "the essential contact between words and the locality that breeds them") (RI 65). It seems that this is what he has in mind when he speaks of the "technique of the artist" making the provinces come to life: "the lifting of an environment to expression" (SL 286).

It is this aspect of provincialism that takes on the greatest importance in Williams's work: the nature of a provincial language - "words marked by a place". In Chapter One we saw Williams attempting to work in an American idiom, a relaxed and informal kind of language that was not characterized by phonetic spelling or obscure diction. Williams rarely shows any interest in writing in a folksy dialect: "I wanted to write in a colloquial way - not slang . . . " (Int 69).14 "Slang is mere escapism" (SS 172),

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14In his Autobiography Williams remembers his father reading the dialect poet Paul Laurence Dunbar to him as a child (15), and as a young man he apparently professed an admiration for James Whitcomb Riley. It would seem an immunity was built up.
which is to say it is artificial rather than natural, without any direct contact with the ground. Pound's put-on bumptiousness is criticized because he "tends to clown it as Lowell does [the Lowell of the Biglow Papers presumably], in a Yankee farm accent, but he doesn't do it well. He clowns it so obviously that - it's a kind of hayseed accent, which is entirely in his own mind. No one would talk that way" (Int 43). The way people (i.e., American people) do talk is in such colloquial words and phrases as "to make good" (from the poem "Pastoral") and "nothing doing" (from "Theocritus: Idyl I"). Both of these phrases find their way onto the same page in Mencken's American Language as examples of "thumping Americanisms" that had come to be accepted by "English authors of dignified standing" for "depicting low or careless characters" (227). Such a dovetailing of the American with the Arcadian is repeated in Williams's use of idiom. As an example of how this worked out in practice let us take a look at Williams's translation of "Theocritus: Idyl I" and compare it to his source, the translation by J. M. Edmonds that appears in the Loeb Classical Library volume Greek Bucolic Poetry.

It will be remembered that in the last chapter one of the points I made about this poem was that it stops right after the description of the decorated drinking bowl. I made the point then that this showed Williams's focus on the visual and objective aspects of pastoral art. When we look
at Williams's source we immediately become aware of another reason for his breaking off where he does. Williams only translates the dialogue portion of the poem. In his translation Edmonds decided to render the dialogue into (admittedly) archaic prose while putting the song into verse. In taking Edmonds's "prose" and breaking it into his highly distinctive triadic line Williams is obviously rejecting this divided approach.

Doing away with the distinction between prose and poetry is, however, only one way in which Williams does battle with Edmonds. Edmonds admits that he is writing in a highly artificial style: "In the prose part of my translation of the pastorals I have adopted an archaic style partly because the shepherd in modern literature does not talk the only modern dialect I know, that of the upper middle-class, and partly in an endeavour to create in them an atmosphere similar to that of the songs" (xxvi). For Williams this was clearly throwing down the gauntlet. When looking at what Williams does to Edmonds what we are really seeing is a confrontation between two different visions of the pastoral "style". Edmonds's decision to write in a deliberately artificial pseudo-dialect only made it easy.

Compare:

No, no, man; there's no piping for me at high noon. I go in too great dread of Pan for that. I wot high noon's his time for taking rest after the swink o' the chase; and he's one o' the tetchy
sort; his nostril’s ever sour wrath’s
abiding place. (11)

No, shepherd,
nothing doing;
it’s not for us
to be heard piping during the noon hush.
We dread Pan,
who for a fact
is stretched out somewhere,
dog tired from the chase;
his mood is bitter
anger ready at his nostrils. (CP2 270)

What we have here is nothing less than a translation of a translation. Williams’s American is as different from Edmonds’s English as Edmonds’s English is from the Greek. The colloquial Americanisms of Williams (phrases like "nothing doing", "dog tired" and "for a fact") are replacing an almost incomprehensible dialect that exists only in Edmonds’s mind. Notice also how much more relaxed and quieter Williams’s verse is - changing the stacatto singular pronouns into a soft "us" that in turn prepares us for the lazy terminal "hush" that appropriately closes out the first sentence over at the far right of the page. Edwards makes us feel nervous over the presence of Pan, as the goatherd merely opines that he’s "taking rest after the swink o’ the chase". Williams locates Pan more comfortably (again making use of the s sound to draw out a lazy line): "stretched out somewhere,/ dog tired from the chase". The sense of exactitude given us by Williams’s "for a fact" should also be taken note of. Certainty is one measure of a poet’s confidence, and it does much to put us at our ease.
Confusion and obscurity, on the other hand, are not qualities we expect to find in genuine pastoral verse. It is hard to feel comfortable in the presence of a language that we cannot understand (this is the source of the anxiety that results from the poet's listening to the voice of the Falls). The goatherd's final appeal to Thyrsis, for example, sounds almost threatening in Edmonds's alienating prose:

To't, good friend; sure thou wilt not be hoarding that song against thou be'st come where all's forgot? (15)

Contrast this with the closing lines of Williams's poem, which are so reassuring in their grasp of the fundamentals:

Begin, my friend,
for you cannot,
you may be sure,
take your song,
which drives all things out of mind,
with you to the other world. (273)

We are quickly put at ease by the familiarity of this direct address: "my friend . . . you . . . you . . . you . . ."

Williams also uses his triadic line with an unusual degree of regularity here, breaking each line naturally with a pause and balancing the subordinate clauses on the falling drift of the sentence. At last all things seem driven out of a calm mind in contemplation of the other world.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15}I haven't raised the issue of metre, as I have done elsewhere, with this poem. I would only point out that the poem was originally entitled "Dactyls - from Theocritus" (CP2 490).
Perhaps no other literary form bears such an interesting relationship to the concept of poetic language as pastoral. The "problem of the knowable community", Raymond Williams writes, "is . . . a problem of language" (171). The problem resides in the need to find a "unity of idiom" between the writer and the community he or she is describing. Using Raymond Williams's examples, we can see how Jane Austen could do this because she had such a narrow idea of community, while George Eliot could not—her rural labourers are only part of a literary landscape. The language of a truly knowable community would be one which the writer could use to communicate with and for the community as a whole, which is something Williams plays with in the poems that address his "townspeople".

In other words a pastoral language is a "common language", which is how Williams describes the voice of the Falls that the modern ear hears only as a chaotic roar. It follows that when Williams describes a pastoral encounter he often draws attention to a language barrier (a barrier that is the consequence of our divorce from a "common" language). Such is the case in "The High Bridge above the Tagus River at Toledo", where the parenthetical comment is made that the young man "didn't speak the language" (CP2 423) of the shepherd. It is the unravelling of this common language,
the interpretation of the voice of the falls, that is the poet's business.\textsuperscript{16}

As might be expected there has been a definite lack of consensus as to what a "common" pastoral language ideally consists of. We earlier noted the two Syracusan women in Theocritus's Idyll 15 being reproached for their provincial speech, and Kermode makes note of how Theocritus, "in those Idylls which deal with country life, made a fairly thorough attempt to write in rustic language, 'placing' his rustics socially by using the Doric dialect, and allowing their hexameters to be occasionally the vehicles of coarse or bawdy expressions" (20).

Unfortunately, from this point on the picture becomes muddled, making it impossible to arrive at any definitive statement about what pastoral language consists of. We

\textsuperscript{16}For all Williams had to say about a "new" language, what he is always returning to is the idea of "recognition" - discovering something "new" that has actually always been with us, a part of our past (or our environment) that we have lost contact with and forgotten. Note the equation of the new with the ancient, and discovery with re-discovery, in the Preface to the Selected Letters: For I soon discovered that there were certain rules, certain new rules, that I became enmeshed in before I had gone far, which I had to master. These were ancient rules, profoundly true but long since all but forgotten. They were overgrown with weeds like ruined masonry. Present teaching had very little to do with them, but that they existed I had no doubts; it remained only for me to re-discover them. A new country, unencumbered by the debris of the ages, offered me this opportunity.
might simplify by arranging the various positions into two broad categories corresponding to the "twin poles" of nature and art. On the side of nature we may put Spenser, who imitates, in the words of E. K., the "naturall" and "rusticall rudenesse of shepheardes" (14;15). E. K. will grant that the language may "be something hard, and of most men unused" (14), but he praises Spenser for his attempt to reclaim a natural "Mother tonge" out of what has been corrupted into "a gallimaufry or hodgepodge of al other speches" (16).

We can use Pope as representative of the school of art. Pope's theory of pastoral was that it was an "image of . . . the Golden Age", and that thus "we are not to describe our shepherds as shepherds at this day really are, but as they may be conceiv'd then [in the Golden Age] to have been" (120). A language such as Spenser's is specifically condemned as overly rustic and "clownish", "entirely obsolete or spoken only by people of the lowest condition" (122) (shepherds for Pope aren't really "lowly" - in the Golden Age such a profession was practised only by the "best of men"). For Pope, pastoral poetry "should be the smoothest, the most easy and flowing imaginable" (121).

The school of art received a severe blow from Wordsworth, who based his theory of poetic language on the "real language of men". Such a language avoids figures of speech and "poetic diction" - the artifice of "a motley
masquerade of tricks, quaintnesses, hieroglyphics, and enigmas" (466). It is this Romantic theory of language that Williams embraces. It is a theory based squarely within a pastoral paradigm. Wordsworth's "real language of men" is specifically located in the countryside, among "[h]umble and rustic life" (447). It is only here that mankind can be redeemed from the "state of almost savage torpor" that has followed the "increasing accumulation of men in cities" (449).

Williams's debt to Wordsworth can be noted in various places. Even in his justification for the use of prose in Paterson one can hear the voice of the "Preface": "there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition" (Wordsworth 451); "[t]he truth is that there is an identity between prose and verse, not an antithesis" (SL 265, emphasis in the original). What Wordsworth condemned as a separation of language from a real "state of mind" or "feeling" becomes in Williams the "divorce" between language and its environment. The American language, Williams's insists, is "bred of the bone of the country itself, nurtured from its plains and streams" (SE 173).

What Williams is trying to do is reverse the action of the Falls by reclaiming an original and natural language -

17We have already seen how Williams reacted to Edmonds in this respect, choosing only to translate his prose into verse.
the speech of the Falls or common language that we are
divorced from. Ideally language should be clean, pure:
"separated out by science, treated with acid to remove the
smudges, washed, dried and placed right side up on a clean
surface" (SE 128). Admittedly it is hard to find anything
very pastoral in such an analogy, which makes it seem as
though the language is as much a product of the lab as its
native ground. What Williams is getting at, however, is the
need to free words from their conventional usage, to return
them to an original state of purity (in Paterson, he refers
to language as his "virgin purpose" (186)). Such scientific
precautions are necessary after the Fall, which was just as
much a Fall of language as anything else:

I touch the words and they baffle me.
I turn them over in my mind and look at
them but they mean little that is clean.
They are plastered with muck out of the
cities. - (I 175, emphasis added)

The tradition Williams is allying himself with has not
escaped criticism in the twentieth-century. Nonetheless,
it is this same Romantic, or natural theory of pastoral
language that Williams adheres to.

In Paterson the battle between a sophisticated and a
provincial language is fought in the "Idyl" that begins Book

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18 Wyndham Lewis mocks the "Romantic persons who go
poking about in the Arran Islands [Synge], Shetlands, the
Basque Provinces, or elsewhere" only to find some local
elder who "will at length, when he has found his tongue,
probably commence addressing them in the vernacular of the
Daily Mail" (80-81). The influence of Synge is noticeable
in Williams's early (unpublished) plays (Koch 148).
IV. In a letter to Marianne Moore dated June 19, 1951, Williams explained that Corydon is meant to represent "the 'great world' against the more or less primitive world of the provincial city" (SL 304). This antagonism is developed by means of the language that the two women use, and Williams's editorializing is kept to a minimum.

Before beginning an analysis of the Idyl I think it would be wise to say a word or two about the sexual situation it involves. Some critics have allowed the dichotomy of innocence and decadence it presents to control their judgement of Williams's moral stance towards homosexuality. In this they are reading neither Williams nor pastoral properly.\(^1\) Admittedly, they may have been misled by Williams's own cryptic statement about the "sexual perversions . . . that every metropolis houses" (IWWP 79).\(^2\) Sharpe (for one), however, is dead wrong in finding that "the tangled sexual situation . . . only underlines the distance from true Arcadia" (148).

Such a puritanical notion of "true Arcadia" is invoked only to highlight what Sharpe sees as Williams's patently

\(^{1}\)I am therefore disagreeing with Poggioli's claim that pastoral does not include the "strange dark land of homosexual love" (62). Some attitudinal bias seems to be present in his judgment (note his use of expressions such as "perversion", "unnatural", "obscene" and "wicked").

\(^{2}\)But is he referring to the Idyl? He only specifically identifies "the perversion of the characters at the close of the fourth section of the poem" (IWWP 79); which could hardly be a reference to the Idyl in the first section of Book IV.
ironic approach. Quinn is essentially of the same opinion, condemning the Idyl as a "disgusting travesty of the pastoral genre" (119). Such a critical stance, however, does not sit well with what we already know about Williams's essentially unironic and expansive reading of pastoral.

"Men versed in the classics . . . are familiar with homosexuality in the arts" ("Intro to the Stories" 4).  
Certainly anyone who had read the notorious fifth Idyll of Theocritus would have known something about how lonely shepherds were reputed to have passed the time. And hadn't Shakespeare had a cross-dressed pair enter the Forest of Arden? The sexual ambiguities of pastoral could hardly have been foreign to a man who had, in his youth, played Celia to Hilda Doolittle's Rosalind (Mariani 144).  
By taking into account the fact that "there is nothing in the pastoral tradition to suggest that one of the two loves is regarded in a better light" (Rosenmeyer 160) we can achieve a more balanced understanding of the issues Williams's Idyl is

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21 Williams actually said "heterosexuality", but as Witemeyer points out, he "clearly means to say homosexuality" ("Intro to the Stories" 24).

22 "[I]t would take years before Williams caught the full impact of what that change in names and gender might have been intended to convey" (Mariani 44).

23 Indeed Ettin goes so far as to claim that "homosexual romantic and erotic relationships . . . are usually accepted as if they were normative" (148) in pastoral society.
really addressing. In doing so I think it will be seen, once again, how conventional Williams's use of the pastoral tradition really is. It is, for example, no doubt true, as Peterson points out, that "Phyllis, the young masseuse-nurse, is to Corydon, her employer, as the country wench of the traditional pastourelle is to her courtly would-be seducer: the relationship is merely transposed into a rather startlingly modern key" (186, emphasis added). We might also comment on the conventionality of the dramatic or dialogue form, ending in the recital of a poem or song. Indeed, Corydon's poems, while not pastoral in themselves, fit perfectly into this form. What she is doing is giving her thoughts and impressions on life in the big city, which is one of the things that shepherds in pastoral have always been singing about. Once again, what we find is not a mock or satiric pastoral but rather a modern pastoral, one that has simply displaced a typical pastoral situation. "The form, an idyl of Theocritus, a perverted but still recognizable 'happy' picture of the past, is there" (SL 305). This said, I would like to now return to the relationship between pastoral and language.

24 A similar argument could be made rejecting the equally popular view that the Idyl presents a "mock pastoral evocation of frustrated sexuality" (Buelens 257). While frustrated sexuality is obviously an important theme in Paterson it is also common to the pastoral tradition (where it expresses itself in the form of the complaint).
There are in fact several voices present in the first section of Book IV (the Idyl). One voice that makes a single brief appearance is that of the "The Poet". The Poet is clearly Eliot, with the

cheap hotels and private entrances of taxis at the door, the car standing in the rain hour after hour by the roadhouse entrance. (154)

recalling the "restless nights in/ one-night cheap hotels" of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock". In addition, the nervous questioning which appears in the next stanza mimics the same found in the third part of The Waste Land. The Poet is not specifically identified because Williams wants us to think of him as something that only writes Poetry. Divorced from his environment (i.e., gone to England) "poor sad Eliot", an abstraction himself, is left describing an abstract waste land.

Although this is the last we hear of The Poet, the fact remains that the Idyl as a whole is easily the most densely allusive section in Paterson. The reason for this largely lies in Corydon’s desire to "do" pastoral poetry in different voices. What this makes her, in the scheme set out in Chapter One, is a plagiarist - someone who merely copies the pastoral (as well as any other) tradition. She is also representative of the artificial theory of pastoral language, using an elevated poetic diction and insisting on the distinction between reality or nature and "the poem". For Williams, the poem is a field whose province is the
whole world - nothing is foreign to poetry. For Corydon, however, poetry has its own set of special rules. The conflict between the two positions is emphasized by Williams's handling of the Idyl's poetry and prose. For Williams, there is an "identity" between poetry and prose; for Corydon, never. Thus, while Phyllis's voice takes a vernacular prose form (her letters home), we never hear Corydon speak in prose.

Out of her personal library "full of books - in all languages!" (152) Corydon drifts away from what Spenser called the "mother tongue" into "a gallimaufry of all other speches". Finally, her separation from nature and the native American environment can be seen in her dismissal of nearby Ramapo (which is an Indian name she can't pronounce) as a "horrid place" (150), and her vacationing in Anticosti, Quebec.

As Grover-Rogoff points out, Corydon's is a poetry "that denies any responsibility to the material world" (24). This failure to maintain "contact" can be seen taking various forms. On the most basic level it is evident in her archaic vocabulary (e.g., "begrimmed", "befouled"). More significantly, Corydon's metaphors are either metaphysically obscure (she has to explain that a "whirring pterodactyl" is a helicopter) or romantically abstract (circling gulls are called "vortices of despair"). There is simply no clear transfer of meaning from the word to the thing; the idea in
no way inheres in the fact. The "divorce" of language is complete.

In reply to Corydon's questioning about the number of her boyfriends Phyllis replies that she has "Only one" (153), which is obviously meant to recall the passage in Book I ending with "only one man - like a city" (7). By making this connection Williams emphasises his intention to make Phyllis into "the female Paterson" (SL 301). In this way she becomes a composite female character, the Queen to Paterson's King (163), drawing together themes and images from throughout the poem. Connaroe, for example, perceptively points out how the African women "semi-naked/ astraddle a log" (13) seem to be present in the description of Phyllis climbing on to Mr. Paterson: "She came, half dressed, and straddled him" (168). She is also one of those "girls from/ Families that have decayed and/ taken to the hills" (12) - indeed the same Ramapos area as spawned the Jackson's Whites. Of the "two women" who meet in Book III she is the

One from the backwoods
a touch of the savage
and of T.B.
(a scar on the thigh) (111).

Here the scar on the thigh prefigures the Beautiful Thing, with her "legs, scarred/ as a child" (126). (An association that is strengthened by Mr. Paterson's command, addressed to both women, to "Take off your clothes" (105;154).)
But perhaps the most interesting connection between Phyllis and the rest of Paterson's "Innumerable women" (7) occurs right at the beginning of Book IV. In an odd parenthetical comment she exclaims "Look, Dad, I'm dancing!" (149). The effect such an exclamation has is to associate Phyllis with a by now familiar dance. Her words are clearly meant to remind us of Mary's dance at the top of Mt. Garret when she calls out "Look a' me, Grandma!" (57).

The point of all of this is that Phyllis is herself the embodiment of the process of putting the complex into the simple. She is the equivalent in character of the regional ethic, someone whose very limitations paradoxically allow her to encompass a broader range of meaning. While Phyllis represents the many reduced to one, her partner Corydon represents the one diffused into the many. Her identity has no integrity and without fixed limits tends to wander away from her. Whereas Phyllis' name really is Phyllis (both a real name and a poetic name, we might say) Corydon is a nom de plume that the "old gal" soon tires of, even wanting to make an exchange at one point. She also likens herself to various animals (horse, guinea hen, toad), in keeping with the metamorphic theme of the Book.

Above all Phyllis is full of the pastoral pride and self-assertiveness we have already discussed as being a part of the tradition. (In fact there is even a hint at a locally aristocratic lineage in the comment she makes to her
father about how their family once owned "the whole valley" (150).) On a boat filled with champagne she says she'll "stick to my rum and coke" (167). 25 "I don't know what they're saying" she says when Corydon begins speaking in French with an Indian guide, "and I don't care, I can talk my own language" (167). 26

I don't mean to imply by any of this that Williams saw the American idiom as the only true language of poetry. What I am saying is that Williams's American idiom is typical of modern conceptions of what a pastoral language should be. Once again context is instructive. In a poem like "Asphodel" a word such as "guerdon" can be used without drawing undue attention to itself; in the Idyl Phyllis has to ask Corydon what it means (166).

Such a pastoral language is natural to true pastoral folk, the Arcadians of the New World. It is the voice of democracy, which for Williams is the political equivalent of that level of thought where a universal identity co-exists

25 "When I was at the University of Pennsylvania, around 1905, I used to argue with Pound. I'd say 'bread' and he'd say 'caviar.' It was a sort of simplification of our positions . . . " (qtd. Breit 100).

26 I am not saying that Phyllis is really the better poet. Phyllis can write a letter home but she can't write a poem. While she has an appropriate language she doesn't have the capacity to make the necessary forms. What I am saying is that within the Idyl she is the genuine Arcadian - Audrey to Corydon's Rosalind. Put another way, she has too much nature in her, and not enough art.
with a celebration of individuality. This is both an ideal we still "labour to perfect" and something that stands at the origin of all art:

back of aristocratic forms lies the democratic groundwork of all forms, basic elements that can be comprehended and used with new force. Being far back in the psychic history of all races no flavor of any certain civilization clings to them, they remain and will remain forever universal, to be built with freely by him can can into whatever perfections he is conscious of. It is here that we must seek. ("American, Whitman and the Art of Poetry" 2)

If this "democratic groundwork" sounds like the womb of art we saw at the end of Chapter Two that is because they both share the same essential characteristics. In The Great American Novel Williams plays with the idea of a primal sound that is described as both "democracy" and "the substance of words" (I 163). Such a sound may take the form of the hum of a dynamo, or it might be found in a baby’s crying "Waaa!" (162). In the Improvisations this return to a primal sound is explicitly linked to pastoral in the brief description of Phyllis and Colin (note the names) with their baby. Here the "Baaaa!" (I 75) of the baby is both a bawling sound as well as the bleating of a sheep: "The screaming brat’s a sheep bleating, the rattling crib-side sheep shaking a bush" (74).

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27Callan describes this as the "horizontal [non-hierarchical] plane and ... developing sense of identity" (170) that the four-book Paterson is continually progressing towards.
What we find then is that a pastoral or common language is the origin of all language. Its residence is another womb - that "moist chamber" entered through a "profound cleft" where thought "has its birth and death" (P 39). Within this womb, cloaked in mystery, "shrouded there, in that din", stands

Earth, the chatterer, father of all speech . . . . . . . (39)

We reach this place of origins by "clambering up" the wet rocks of the Falls (38), which is a reversal of its action. To be able to interpret the primal "din" we must first recognize it as our common tongue.
CHAPTER FOUR
CHAOS FEEDS THE TREE

-a furnace, a cavity aching
toward fission; a hollow,
a woman waiting to be filled
-Paterson

It has long been recognized that one of the greatest
difficulties in discussing pastoral is that of definition. The reasons for this lie in pastoral's "invasive" (Chambers xxviii) or "expansionist" (Rosenmeyer 7) tendencies - its reputation for trespassing "freely on the territory of the other major literary genres" (Halperin 28). Toliver notes how pastoral has a "capacity to devour elegies, lyrics, plays, fairy tales, masques, odes, and . . . to gnaw ambitiously at romances, epics and novels" (vii). We must, then, find a way
to talk about pastoral and its various uses that recognizes that it is capable of assuming a form peculiar to itself and also of interpenetrating other forms as a creative element; a way, in other words, that accounts for the capacity of pastoral, traditionally the humblest of poetic forms, to take on various tonalities grander than the shepherd's flute can offer and to marry, frequently and bigamously, above itself. (Marinelli 7)

It will have been noted that I am assuming pastoral does operate in such a "bigamous" way all along but I would now like to deal directly with the question of pastoral and genre, with how it interpenetrates other forms as a creative
element and takes on "tonalities grander than the shepherd's flute".

What I want to arrive at is a way of relating Williams's concept of dissonance to his use of pastoral. In the last chapter we saw how the stability and organicism of the pastoral community make it representative of a kind of perfect natural order. At the same time, however, pastoral has always been associated with ease and leisure - a carelessness that contrasts with the strictly regimented world of mechanical order we find in industrial society. Upon first view this natural carelessness will have a tendency to appear as a kind of chaos, and until we recognize the larger order that it represents we experience a sense of dissonance. We have already seen this in terms of the startling or disjunctive effect created by the garden sometimes intruding into the urban world of the machine.

What we have, then, is the sudden effect of a sense of disorder, followed by an awareness of a new, larger order previously "unsuspected". Order and wholeness are ultimately seen by Williams "both as the ideal and the unrecognized reality of the nature of things" (Ostrom 58, emphasis added).¹ Revealing this ideal order is the

¹This conclusion is arrived at by Ostrom within the context of his analysis of Williams's romanticism. He notes how Williams specifically locates this ideal "order" in nature and the country and opposes it to urban rationalism. Nothing, however, is done to relate this habit of thought to Williams's use of pastoral.
function of pastoral:

the world it opens is always a place
formerly
unsuspected. A
world lost,
a world unsuspected (P 78).

Pastoral has traditionally been understood as occupying the lowest position in a hierarchy of literary genres. This ranking is most clearly demonstrated in the Renaissance notion of the progression of the epic poet's career. Taking Virgil as a canonical model, the epic poet is seen as properly beginning with the "humblest of poetic forms" and progressing through the mastery of his craft to the heroic heights of the grand style (moving from the Eclogues to the Aeneid; the Shepheardes Calender to the Fairie Queene). The process can be analogized to the way the "Greek shepherd's hut, with posts holding up the forepart of the roof, became the Parthenon when the dignity of the race demanded it" (RI 214). A poet following this model could advance in a logical way from youthful apprenticeship in the pastoral toward the heroic poem in his maturity, and discover through the Virgilian model a kind of plot for his own literary career that imposed upon his life the formal design of art. (Rosenberg 17)

One can think of Williams's career as having this same kind of shape or design (beginning with a number of "Pastoral" poems and culminating in the five-book Paterson); an analogy that is supported by his early recognition that his first poems were only preliminary to "the long song" he
would write "On the day when youth is no more upon me" \((\text{CPI} 17)\). One doesn't have to accept that this is exactly the way things worked out (although to a remarkable extent it is), only that there was such an informing shape in the back of Williams's mind.

As a form the epic has evolved a great deal over the years. In particular, the historical theme has largely been replaced by autobiography (which is the only form of history Williams appreciates). This gradual removal from the great world of affairs has increasingly allowed epic to be associated with pastoral, until, with \textit{The Prelude}, we find ourselves approaching something like a pastoral epic.\(^2\) Williams's infusion of his epic with a good deal of pastoral blood is not, therefore, unorthodox.\(^3\)

Pastoral has also been traditionally used within an epic framework as a way of commenting on the narrative of heroic action that it stands outside. One of the things emphasized in Chapter Two was that pastoral is not a narrative form. Its influence on a larger work, then, will usually to take the form of an interlude - the pastoral "moment" (or "oasis" in Poggioli's terms, "inset" in

\(^{2}\)Rosenberg notes how the epic "increasingly concentrates upon inward experience, contemplation and the paradise within. Accordingly, there is a persistent shift of center in the genre to the pastoral" (192).

\(^{3}\)Empson observes that there are many ways in which the pastoral and the heroic overlap. In particular this is noticed in the way both pastoral and heroic literature tend to make their heroes symbolic of an entire society.
Ettin's). Lindenberger, for example, defines pastoral as taking the "form of an island in time . . . one which gains its meaning and intensity through the tensions it creates with the historical world" (338).

Keeping this definition in mind let us look at the example of the Shakers, a group Williams conceived of in terms of pastoral community:

Here was a sect, isolated by their beliefs, living in small self-sufficient communities, seeking to make what they needed out of what they had for the quiet and disciplined life they sought. It was a bigoted, small life, closing in of themselves for a purpose, but it was simple and inoffensive. All of these qualities appear in the workmanship, a kind of gentle parable to the times. To no purpose. It was vitally necessary that wealth should accumulate. It did. It couldn't help it. The consequences were persistent and unfortunate. And the strategy of fashion, partisans of the colonial spirit, had to be to keep the locally related in a secondary place. (SE 150)

The Shakers are seen by Williams as occupying a distinct island in time, "one which gains its meaning and intensity through the tensions it creates with the historical world". Their community has withdrawn from the modern world and set up a self-contained anti-world of quiet and peaceful order. The point Williams is making in this essay is that in a world (the historical world) dominated by inflexible economic laws ("It was vitally necessary that wealth should accumulate. It did. It couldn't help it.") such a simple self-sufficient community cannot possibly survive. At one
time the Shakers provided a "gentle parable to the times" - a pastoral commentary on the "purchased culture" and "wealth rule" of the (specifically urban) colonials - but pastoral communities are too fragile to withstand the forces of history for long. Against such progressive forces (like the road we saw being built in the poem "Autumn") the pastoral world can maintain itself only for a poetic moment. The fleeting quality of such moments has, in turn, long been considered one of the sources of pastoral's enduring appeal. "Pastoral poetry", Poggioli explains, "makes more poignant and real the dream it wishes to convey when the retreat is not a lasting but a passing experience, acting as a pause in the process of living, as a breathing spell for the fever and anguish of being" (9).

For Lindenberger's historical world we can, I think, substitute narrative or linearity generally. Poggioli describes how the topos of the locus amoenus is traditionally used to "break the main action or pattern, suspending for a while the heroic, romantic or pathetic mood of the whole" (9). A pastoral "inset", Ettin explains, "perforce interrupts the flow of a work":

Such an interruption may constitute a diversion from the main direction of the work or a counterforce to the main movement; so it can represent an obstacle or even a direct challenge to the course of the main action. (76)

Thus in Book VI of The Faerie Queene Calidore's stay among the shepherds is seen as a kind of truancy, a pastoral
interlude that takes him away from and disrupts the progress of his quest (perhaps the archetypical form of narrative).

Even after we leave the epic for more modern forms of narrative (in particular the novel) this same pattern of pastoral disruption occurs. A good example of the way the process of interrupted narrative works can be seen in the "Water Party" chapter in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*. In that chapter the sisters Ursula and Gudrun leave a crowded social event to go to have a picnic by themselves in a wooded grove on the hillock of a meadow-side by the shore of a lake. The idyllic spot is described as having a "golden light" (229). After rowing over to the secluded grove they take off their clothes and go swimming and then run around the woods "like nymphs" to get dry. After tea they comment on how "perfectly happy" they feel: "this was one of the perfect moments of freedom and delight, such as children alone know, when all seems a perfect and blissful adventure" (230). Ursula then begins to sing a "satiric" song and Gudrun does a dance that magically draws a herd of cattle. It is all a perfect pastoral moment, spoiled when Gerald comes upon the scene and shouts to scare the cattle away. The noisy world of the party they return to is, significantly, one associated immediately with violent death.

Pastoral moments are always being interrupted in just such a way, which Marx (describing the American archetype)
refers to as the effect of the machine bursting into the garden. However, with Williams (as, indeed, with many other writers) what may be happening is more an "interpenetration, both ways" (P 4). As we have already seen, for Williams the pastoral has a way of intruding upon, or disrupting, the modern world of progress and the machine (the two go naturally together: "I'm new, says the great dynamo. I am progress." (I 162)). While, of course, it is the pastoral world itself that is destroyed by the re-assertion of narrative or the world of the machine (which we could expand to an invasion by pirates or whatever) it is this same pastoral world that is also the intrusive element. That is to say, a pastoral vision is likely to cause one to experience a feeling of dissonance.

A narrative, like a quest, has a direction, it is movement with a purpose. The way it proceeds will be a lot like this:

The body is tilted slightly forward from the basic standing position and the weight thrown on the ball of the foot, while the other thigh is lifted and the leg and opposite arm are swung forward (fig. 6B). Various muscles, aided . (P 45)

This is the purposeful stride of the Minister approaching his pulpit, as opposed to the old man who merely "goes about" doing things. There are two things that this suggests.

First of all, it should be said that what the prose excerpt from the Journal of the American Medical Association
describes as a purely mechanical exercise is typically presented as being more flexible in Williams’s verse. In the Introduction I made reference to the differences between a pedestrian as opposed to a vehicular way of seeing (cf. Introduction note 11). It was said then that walking brings us into closer contact with the pastoral world, while driving in a car emphasizes our dissociation from the same. Hence Williams’s command to

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WALK in the world
(you can't see anything
from a car window, still less
from a plane, or from the moon!? Come
off of it.) (P 211)
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The dissociation of the driver (or passenger) is a point forcefully made in "Romance Moderne". In this poem, the poet (a passenger in the back seat of a car) contrasts the green world he sees outside the car window with the tangled

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4Oddly enough, the article from which this passage is taken goes on to describe walking in far more pastoral terms. In particular, note the following observation: "Crowded city pavements and dirty fume-laden air usually promote bad walking posture, whereas the varied topography and surfaces and the clean air make good walking posture easier . . . " (qtd. Weaver 206).

5Gilbert’s equation of the walk with a poem is interesting in this context: As a brief excursion directed towards no practical goal but undertaken purely for the pleasure of movement, reflection, and aesthetic perception, the walk closely resembles the modality of the lyric poem, which also can be said to lack the kind of teleological element encountered in prose writing, be it narrative or expository. (3)
sexual situation within:

Tracks of rain and light linger in
the spongy greens of a nature whose
flickering mountain - bulging nearer,
ebbing back into the sun
hollowing itself away to hold a lake, -
or brown stream rising and falling
at the roadside, turning about,
churning itself white, drawing
green in over it, - plunging glassy funnels
fall -

And - the other world -
the windshield a blunt barrier: (CP1 147)

Facing both this vision and the barrier that separates him
from it (there is always a barrier), he feels the call of
the pastoral, a desire "to fling oneself out at the side
into/ the other dance, to other music" (148). He considers
that if he were young he would "alight nimbly from the car"
(148) and revel in a happy state of natural innocence like
"a toad in a garden" (148). 7

The second point I wanted to make about the difference
between a simple mechanical forward motion and the old man
"going about" his daily tasks has to do with pastoral's
upsetting of progressive, linear motion generally. The lack
of direction implied in "going about" is also present in the

6Apparently the poet is in the back seat flirting with
a friend's wife, while their respective spouses are sitting
up front (CP1 496-498).

7This is clearly an allusion. Poetry, in the words of
Marianne Moore, presents us with real toads in imagined
gardens. That is to say, poetry absorbs "raw" reality into
a "genuine" imaginary form. Toads are representative of
nature in the raw while the garden (a porcelain garden) is a
human form.
"straggling" and "wandering" of the trappers and Indians we noticed in the Longwell material, as well as the identification of the picturesque summit of Mt. Garret with "idlers" and "loiterers" (56). While there is no etymological connection between "idle" and "idyll" the two do seem to go together. For example, Williams speaks of the Spring of 1909 as a time when "I was idle, if restless, for a few divine weeks! I went into the fields along the river at times to do some painting . . . I had no idea where I was headed - an altogether idyllic moment" (A 106, emphasis added). Part of the idyllicism of this moment is provided by Williams's idleness, his lack of purpose and direction. "What but indirection/ will get to the end of the sphere?" (P 209).³

³A combination of these two themes, idleness and the vehicular vision, can be seen in the poem "View of a Lake" (CPI 380-381). The man, in his car, is one step removed from the view of "pure" nature (the lake) that so engrosses the children. Note the criticism of his position implied in the description of the children standing "beside the weed-grown/ chassis/ of a wrecked car". In turn, the "stalled" traffic is what allows the driver's "unanticipated, accidental moment" (Rapp 94) of vision.
Indirection is clearly another way of expressing this same sense of serendipity.

In the poem "The Forgotten City" (CP2 86-87) Williams describes how he and his mother were driving down "from the country" when they were forced off route by a hurricane that made "the parkways impassable"

so that I had to take what road
I could find bearing to the south and west,
to get back to the city.

The placement is significant, locating Williams in a landscape somewhere between the country and the city.

Forced out of his way

I passed through
extraordinary places, as vivid as any
I ever saw where the storm had broken
the barrier and let through
a strange commonplace: Long deserted avenues
with unrecognized names at the corners and
drunken looking people with completely
foreign manners. Monuments, institutions
and in one place a large body of water
startled me with an acre or more of hot
jets spouting up symmetrically over it. Parks.

We have moved from the parkway to the park, the land of
"strange commonplace" (a conjunction of the alien and the everyday). Like Dorothy being transported to Oz, the violence of the storm has "broken the barrier" between one kind of world and another. (This is, of course, the same barrier we have seen separating our world from the pastoral place.) In this strange new world there are many familiar landmarks, but what registers the greatest effect on Williams are the "Parks". Again we have the sense of re-
visiting Paradise, with the symmetrical fountains appearing as modern replicas of the hydraulics in Eden.

"I had no idea where I was and promised myself/ I would some day go back . . . ", but of course he hasn’t, and never will. The Forgotten City is a vision more than it is a place. Like so many of Williams’s pastoral moments it simply appears as if by accident, and will not be discovered on any map.

Who are these people, Williams asks, who live in isolation "so near the metropolis, so closely surrounded by the familiar and famous?" How have they managed to avoid being exposed to, and contaminated by, the outside world? The only thing we are told about them is that they look drunk. It seems to me that the Forgotten City is a pastoral oasis, its peace and quiet order at odds with both the violent natural world of the hurricane Williams is fleeing, and the famous and familiar world of the metropolis it lies "so near".9

I have, in some respects, been generalizing in my analysis of this poem - making it carry what some may consider to be an excessive symbolic weight. It seems clear to me, however, that this is the proper course to take. In "The Forgotten City" Williams makes use of a personal

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9As such the poem is almost the epitome of Williams’s "quiet style", what Martz characterizes as "easy, rippling colloquial rumination" (128). Feminine line endings once again predominate, this time as the result of the rather atypical, run-on prose-like quality of the verse.
experience to illustrate a situation of almost archetypal significance. "The Forgotten City" was published in 1939. As is well known, Williams’s first major attempt at writing poetry was the "three pound" four-book imitation of Keats’s Endymion that he wrote in early 1908. Williams later burned the manuscript, but in the Autobiography he recalls how it began:

The poem itself began at that point, the young prince had been abducted in his dream state and taken to a "foreign country" at some distance from the kingdom which was now his. Here he had roused from his slumber. I’ll never forget that passage of awakening! It occurred in a forest (Wagnerian?) over which a storm had just passed; it was possibly a thunderclap that had done the trick.

As he opened his eyes, he found himself alone, lying in a comfortable place among the trees, quite in the open, with torn branches on all sides of him and leaves, ripped from their hold, plastered in fragments upon the rocks about him. Unfortunately, though, he didn’t recognize the place. No one was there to inform him of his whereabouts and when he did begin to encounter passers-by, they didn’t even understand, let alone speak his language. (59)

This isn’t just similar to "The Forgotten City", it is "The Forgotten City" - horribly romanticized but still recognizable. The removal to a "foreign country" prefigures the people with "completely foreign manners"; the storm that wakes the prince becomes the storm that breaks the barrier to reveal the Forgotten City. In addition, a lack of recognition is stressed in both accounts. We may
particularize this and notice how this plays itself out in terms of language. In Chapter Three it was suggested that there may be a barrier between the debased language we have become accustomed to and the common tongue of pastoral. Williams draws attention to this in the above passage, noting how the residents of the foreign country don't speak the prince's language. In "The Forgotten City" what Williams fails to recognize are the names on a street sign.

The earlier version of the story is useful in much the same way that invoking Spenser's Garden of Adonis is useful to an understanding of Paterson Book V. That is, it allows us to view the myth more directly (romance being more closely associated with myth than realistic modes of writing). One may dispute my reading of the Forgotten City as a pastoral oasis, but taking this earlier version of the story as a prototype we can see how such a concept clearly underlies the later poem. The "foreign country" is patently idyllic - a "comfortable place among the trees", "at some distance from the Kingdom", which the prince has travelled to in a "dream state". Just because Williams is more "realistic" in "The Forgotten City" doesn't make it any the less pastoral. "Remember, we are still in a world of fancy if perhaps disguised but still a world of wish-fulfillment in dreams" (SE 282).

I have used "The Forgotten City" to show how a process of indirection (being forced off his normal route by the
storm) brings Williams to the pastoral oasis. Earlier, I chose as an illustration the scene from Women in Love because it illustrates the way the pastoral moment sets itself apart from narrative. This is something that is hard to show happening in Williams's poetry, but we do find similar episodes occurring in his fiction.

The most obvious pastoral oasis is located at the end of In the Money. For a space of several chapters Williams leaves the story of Joe Stecher and his wife Gurlie to describe the stay of their two daughters with their aunts out in the country. (Mangna, whose description as a "pretty milkmaid of peasant memories" we already looked at in Chapter Two, is one of the aunts.) The farm they stay at was originally purchased by their Aunt Hilda as a place "where she could go from her seamstress work in New York and paint lovely pictures all summer" (297) (note again the association of rural retreat with art). School is out for the children and they are enjoying an idyllic holiday:

At last you could lie on your back on the grass without care, the phlox was in flower over the top of the east wall and a luxuriant silence filled the whole little valley. (312)

In one chapter, "Adventure", Williams describes an expedition by Charlotte, Floss and a bunch of other local children to gather water from a spring out in the woods. There is a perfectly good spring next to the farmhouse, but Hilda likes
the water from a truly crystal spring
that overflowed from a barrel sunk in
the ground a quarter of a mile across
the pastures east of the house at the
base of the hill in the deep maple and
spruce forest. (311)

On their way out to the spring in the woods the children
have to pass through a barred barnyard gate (a simple piece
of description that takes on a symbolic weight when read in
conjunction with what follows). It is a "fiery hot day
toward the middle of June" and they pass by mowers out
cutting grass on the hillsides (311).

The whole chapter describes a perfect pastoral of
childhood innocence. In particular, despite the natural
danger present in the forest the children are not afraid,
and seem unthreatened by any harm. The baby eats a fern
leaf that is said to be poison but it has no effect (316).
Another child is scared by a woodchuck but is told "He can't
hurt you" (319) (Perhaps more impressively it is said that
the bears "won’t hurt you" (322) either.) Olga asks at one
point if there are any snakes around and is given the answer
"Never saw none" (319) (obviously there are snakes, it is
just that they are not a threat). Another incident involves
a warning not to eat the "deadly nightshade" (322).

The children also come across "a large, half-dead
phallus head of a fungus sticking up among some dead ferns"
(320). There is a warning that mushrooms are "real poison",
but one of the boys kicks it over while saying "I ain’t
afraid of them . . . They're nothin’" (321). This is
particularly significant because it highlights both the children's freedom from any natural danger (the presence of which suffuses the description of nature throughout the chapter) as well as their sexual innocence. They are babes in the woods, rejoicing in their freedom and inviolability.

Other elements in this same episode can be connected to pastoral elements we have already looked at, in particular the description of the boys "dancing around like Indians" (323) in the woods. I introduce it here merely to give an example of Williams's use of the pastoral oasis (in this case a literal oasis, a "truly crystal spring" in the woods that symbolically occupies the same place as the symmetrical fountains in "The Forgotten City") to break away from the urban world of business and ambition that the Stecher trilogy is really about. That is to say, narrative linearity (and it is hard to imagine fiction as plodding as this) is disrupted by the evocation of a seemingly timeless idyll.

One other aspect of the natural description in this chapter stands out as being of special significance: "A butterfly, a satyr, went zigzagging by and away among the heavy trees" (322). A lot has been written about Williams's satyrs but little has been done to relate them to his conception of pastoral (which is, after all, what they come out of). I have already had occasion to mention the dance of satyrs in Paterson in Chapter Two, but I may be
able to shed some new light on their use within the context of the present discussion. It will be recalled that Mr. Paterson thinks instinctively of satyrs when watching Mary dancing in the park, and that Book V ends "Satyrically" with an invitation to dance "the tragic foot" (236). What Williams is playing on here is the etymological root of tragedy in the Greek tragos or "goat song". For some, including Aristotle in the Poetics, tragedy had its origins in the dithyrambic chorus. Such a theory of literary pre-history struck a chord with Williams,\(^\text{10}\) who gives it a place in Paterson Book V:

\[\begin{align*}
. . . & \text{ or the Satyrs, a} \\
& \text{pre-tragic play,} \\
& \text{a satyric play!} \\
& \text{All plays} \\
& \text{were satyric when they were most devout. (219)}\]^\text{11}
\]

The point has been made that while it "is tempting to call the satyr plays simply pastoral plays . . . they are not about nymphs and shepherds in an idyllic countryside" (Levi 165). This may, however, be a criticism based upon a limited notion of pastoral (as well as a very sketchy idea

\[\begin{align*}
\text{10} & \text{ Every day that I go out to my car} \\
& \text{I walk through a garden} \\
& \text{and wish often that Aristotle} \\
& \text{had gone on} \\
& \text{to a consideration of the dithyrambic} \\
& \text{poem - or that his notes had survived. (CP2 228)}
\]

\[\begin{align*}
\text{11} & \text{Wallace claims that Williams carefully avoids the} \\
& \text{scholarly controversies about the origins of tragedy in this} \\
& \text{passage, saying that "the poem neither agrees nor disagrees} \\
& \text{with the vexed theory that tragedy developed out of 'goat} \\
& \text{song'" (139). I have trouble seeing Williams being this coy.}
\]
of what the satyr plays were really like). Rosenmeyer, for one, feels that satyr drama makes use of many features that recur in Theocritus: "the address to the goat, shooing it from one place to another; the references to simple pastoral activities, like milking and the suckling of kids; and finally the setting - the cave, the meadow, the spring, the breezes" (37). We may remark that there is something about a world of common folk drinking, dancing and making endless love in the forest that is essentially pastoral in its bearing.

"Satyr plays" still survived in Greek drama after the advent of tragedy, although the only extant example is the Cyclops of Euripides. According to one theory

the double aspect of Dionysiac ritual - the mourning for the dead god and the joyous celebration at his resurrection - accounts for the connection between tragedy and the satyr-play. On this theory tragedy contains the agon of the dying god, while the satyr-play, like comedy, exhibits the happy celebration for the reborn god and the ritual of the sacred marriage and rounds off the complete drama of the rite in a sportive coda. (Arrowsmith 229-30)

Again we have the notion of a coda combined with the myth of a dying and reviving god, which we have already discussed in relation to Paterson Book V. There is, however, something else going on here, a juxtaposition of the tragic with the satyric that is aimed at a particular effect. It seems Williams is thinking of this same "satyric" effect in his analysis of Dante's poetry:
Note that beginning with the first line of the terza rima at any given onset, every four lines following contain a dissonance. In the Book of Love four rhymes are continuous, one piled upon the next four in the manner of masonry. Throughout the Commedia this fourth unrhymed factor, unobserved, is the entrance of Pan to the Trinity which restores it to the candid embrace of love underlying the peculiar, faulty love of the great poem which makes remote, by virtue, that which possessed, illuminates the Spanish epic [the Libro de Buen Amor]. (SE 207)

The satyrs (represented in this passage by Pan, the god of Arcadia) are figures of dissonance (or anarchy), commenting in their wild freedom on a world of order (the tragic trilogy, the terza rima, the four-book Paterson, the whole "silly world of history") that they stand outside of. And dissonance "(if you are interested)/ leads to discovery" (P 175):

From disorder (a chaos)
order grows
- grows fruitful.
The chaos feeds it. Chaos
feeds the tree. (CP2 238)

We have already seen how the "pastoral moment" exists as a kind of island in time that acts as a spiritual oasis, a point of illumination or refreshment. It does this by creating a dissonance with the rest of the text, a dissonance that takes the form of discovery.

Williams's most celebrated image for dissonance is the "radiant gist", the "dissonance/ in the valence of Uranium" (P 175). We experience this dissonance initially as being
chaotic, something that does not fit into our preconceived notions of atomic order. The radiant gist itself, however, is not chaotic. Rather it is part of a larger order in a new world "unsuspected" - a new order which is in fact entirely natural. For Williams, this new natural order is typically expressed in terms of pastoral. As a result it is really no more a "new" world than America was new in 1492, or radium was new in 1898. It is merely a world "formerly unsuspected", a world (like our language) that was lost and must now be re-discovered and recognized (cf. Chapter Three note 16).

In the poem "Pastoral", for example, the spectator sees

roof out of line with sides
the yards cluttered
with old chicken wire, ashes,
furniture gone wrong;
the fences and outhouses
built of barrel-staves
and parts of boxes (CP1 64).

All of this run-down jumble seems a mere anarchic mess, but what the poet sees in it is not disorder but "Parts of a Greater World". 12 This impression is made more explicit in a passage from a short story entitled "Comedy Entombed: 1930":

I took my time to look around a bit as
I stood there wondering. The whole
place had a curious excitement about it
for me, resembling that of the woman herself. I couldn’t precisely tell why.

12 "Order is what is discovered after the fact, not a little piss pot for us all to urinate into - and call ourselves satisfied" (SL 214, emphasis added).
There was nothing properly recognizable, nothing straight, nothing in what ordinarily might have been called its predictable relationships. Complete disorder. Tables, chairs, worn-out shoes piled in one corner. A range that didn’t seem to be lighted. Every angle of the room jammed with something or other ill-assorted and of the rarest sort.

I have seldom seen such disorder and brokenness - such a mass of unrelated parts of things lying about. That’s it! I concluded to myself. An unrecognizable order! Actually the new! And so good-natured and calm. So definitely the thing! (FD 327)

We are immediately presented with a vision of chaos, nothing is "recognizable" (a key word we will recall from "The Forgotten City" and the story of the young prince). Then comes a discovery - "That’s it!" This is the new world unsuspected, not an artificial world of junk but a world expressive of "good-natured" order.

To summarize: In our modern mechanical existence a vision of timeless natural order and harmony will at first strike us as chaotic. It is dissonant with our normal (urban and historical) understanding of reality. This sudden dissonance, however, leads to an exciting discovery, brought about by a process of the imagination. This discovery is of the "new" (and we must keep that in quotation marks) world. Through this process we have, in effect, reversed the action of the Falls, re-creating Paradise. It is this imaginative Paradise that Williams associates with pastoral.
A final illustration. There is a wonderful passage in the Autobiography which describes an evening with Constantin Brancusi:

After a tour of the Louvre with Bob, my eyes still blurred from the night before, Floss, Bob and I went to Brancusi’s again, this time for supper, that is for beefsteak cooked by Brancusi himself, the Romanian shepherd, something for which he was famous. We talked, everyone in Paris talked, talked, talked, surrounded by his creations in wood and stone, like the sheep, one might say, cropping out of the chaos of unorganized masses (later to be worked upon), the rocks and trees of a shepherd’s world in the flickering half-light about us. (196)

"One might say", especially if that one is William Carlos Williams. Brancusi, unlike Breughel, actually was a shepherd - a fact that must have thrilled Williams. He did not, however, create art that was recognizably, or even nominatively, pastoral. In seeing sheep in the stone (like Corydon), and creating a "shepherd’s world" out of chaos Williams is letting his imagination ("the flickering half-light") work pre-emptively on Brancusi’s material. Like the spectator in "Pastoral" he is looking at chaos, but that is not what he sees. He sees a pastoral world and the pastoral world is not chaotic, it feeds upon chaos - "chaos feeds the tree".11

11Recalling Spenser’s Garden of Adonis:
   For in the wide wombe of the world there lyes,
   In hatefull darknesse and in deepe horrore,
   An huge eternall Chaos, which supplyes
   The substances of natures fruitfull progenyes. (361)
It is this birth of pastoral out of chaotic forces that is what makes Mr. Paterson think of satyrs when he watches the dance at the top of Garret Mountain (and makes Lawrence describe the dance of Gudrun as "satiric"). We should also consider the "butterfly, a satyr" that zigzags past the children in the woods, and the drunken looking residents of "The Forgotten City" as part of the same design.

The dance, for Williams, bears a close relation to many of the pastoral themes we have been reviewing. It is with a discussion of this relation that I would like to conclude. In Act II Scene 2 (the exact middle) of The First President there is a ballet that Williams describes as "the peak of action. The pinnacle of feeling" (311). The ballet itself, which bears some resemblance to a masque, is divided into three parts: "Fantasy - A Dream", "Reality" and "Tragedy". In the first part a sleeping sentry at Valley Forge is visited by a group of dancing Snow Maidens and their Queen. They begin to dance but are interrupted by the arrival, in the second part, of Washington and a group of his "young officers" who chase after the Maidens. The Snow Queen and Washington dance with each other and then the sentry is invited to join in. After a bit of encouragement he does so, excelling all the others in his virtuosity. In the final part or "Tragedy", "at the height of his ecstasy" (342) the sentry sees the British approaching. There is a
brief battle, during which the sentry sacrifices himself to save the life of Washington. The others "lift up the dead hero" and carry him "up the embankment" in what is described as his "Apotheosis" (343).

Williams insisted that this was "intended to be a 'true' ballet" (341), which means, for one thing, that it is not to be taken ironically. Now ballet itself is a pretty aristocratic art form, and if we add in a troupe of Snow Maidens and their Queen then it should be obvious that we are moving in a rarefied atmosphere (corresponding to the claim that this was to be "the peak of action. The pinnacle of feeling").

The First President itself is an opera that concerns itself with heroic figures dominating a historical canvas of considerable scope. Within this epic framework, however, there is still a pastoral undertow. George Washington, for example, is described as having a "desire for retirement, for peace, for pastoral exercises . . . " (305). This desire is fulfilled in the final scene with the Chorus welcoming him to that

well-resorted tavern
of your heart's desire, the
vine and fig-tree under whose
benignant shade that heart
has longed to rest in peace. (357)

The ballet, however, is more than symbolic of this desire for rural retreat. Williams insisted that it not be considered a mere "diversion" or "distraction" but rather
"an important functional part intended to delineate a situation in order to clarify and dignify it, to endow it with its full emotional power" (341).

What is so important about such a scene? What "function" does it serve, what situation "clarify"?

Certainly the dance itself is the one event in the libretto which is of no historical significance whatsoever (and, under pressure, he was willing to get rid of it (A 301)). What significance it does have lies in relation to its furthering of a democratic ideal - "the thing we still labor to perfect" (303).

The democratic ideal is the key. The pastoral trick being employed in the ballet is that of inversion. Like the old man in the gutter being more dignified than the minister, here the Commander-in-Chief is made "second" to the sentry. Washington makes it clear to the Queen "that there is the real dancer" (342, emphasis in the original).

Just as natural language rhythms are found among common rural types, so the measure of the dance is discovered in humble surroundings. For all of its importance to Williams, "the dance" is a decidedly crude affair. It is characterized most often by our backsides: the peasants "swinging their butts" in Breughel's "The Kermess" (CP2 59); the "ample-bottomed doxies" at a wedding dance (CP2 390), a whore in Juarez with "her bare can waggling crazily" (CP2 281). Even dancing grotesquely before his mirror Williams
admires his buttocks (CP1 87). This common quality asserts itself in the ballet, with Washington's jig and reel. For Williams, the dance combines, and even equates, the everyday with the visionary. It is a favourite pastoral pastime that provides yet another symbol of that higher order where identities are drawn.  

I would, in fact, go so far as to say that this is the archetypical pastoral metaphor - the identification through inversion of the high and low. Wordsworth's assertion that the modern shepherd unites spiritual sublimity with "the most common" of occupations is fundamental to pastoral as it has come to be understood. We have already seen the same pattern of identification in Williams: Phyllis, the nurse from the backwoods, is also described as being a Queen. Here we have an equivalence of the ascent with the descent, the lifting up with the coming down. Such an equivalence is illustrative of what Toliver characterizes as "pastoral's fluid exchange of identities and the vicarious participation of levels and classes in each other" (11):

The interpenetration of levels in these variations of pastoral is not merely the wooing of hierarchical social elements that Empson finds central to pastoral but also a discovery of unfamiliar dimensions of nature and a common sacred ground in the landscape, the mysteries and primitive symbols of which are so

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14Rodgers suggests all of this in her observation that both modern poetry and modern dance reach "back in human memory to an idyllic time when man seemed in closer harmony with natural things" (Universal Drum 11).
basic that all participants in them are "levelled" upward. (11)\textsuperscript{15}

In The First President this levelling upwards takes the form of a highly ritualized dance, prefigured by the paradox of equivalence in Washington's "jig and reel with the beautiful Queen" (342).

One of the best known examples of this pastoral association of the sublime and the common, the high and the low, occurs in Book VI of The Faerie Queene. This is the Book of Courtesy and it is part of the pastoral paradox that one of the places Calidore must go to learn about courtesy is a community of shepherds: "Ne certes mote he greatly blamed be,/ From so high step to stoupe vnto so low" (688).

The reason Calidore cannot be blamed is that in this case the high is being identified with the low. In Canto X he climbs Mt. Acidale and comes upon "a troupe of Ladies dauncing" (689) to the pipe of Colin Clout. The dance is very formal: it has "An hundred naked maidens lilly white, All raunged in a ring" (690), with three other ladies (identified with the Graces) dancing within their circle.

"But she that in the midst of them did stand", exalted above all the rest, is none other than a simple "iolly Shepheards lasse" (691). Entranced at this "straunge sight", Calidore

\textsuperscript{15}Empson considers this to be the "essential trick" of pastoral. A "beautiful relation between rich and poor" is implied by "seeing the two sorts of people combined" (11-12).
advances out of the woods he has been hiding in and the dance vanishes into thin air.

By now such a moment should seem very familiar. Calidore's interruption of the dance no doubt reminds us of Gerald scaring the cattle away or the British arriving on the scene in the ballet of *The First President*. Calidore is the embodiment of the larger narrative (a knight on a quest), disrupting the idyllic moment or pastoral interlude of the dance.

But something else makes this scene, in Hamilton's analysis, "the allegorical core of the whole poem, its climactic vision, and the moving centre about which the poem turns" (623). This is the kind of language Williams uses to describe the ballet and, perhaps more importantly, the dance that the voyeuristic Mr. Paterson observes at the top of Mt. Garret in *Paterson*: "the center of movement, the core of gaiety" (56). As in the dance at the top of Mt. Acidale we have a climbing up (reversing the Fall) to a "*common sacred ground* in the landscape, the mysteries and primitive symbols of which are so basic that all participants in them are 'levelled' upwards". We do so through what Tonkin calls the "almost schizophrenic vision" of "the shepherd maid who . . . also has the appearance and the substance of a goddess" (137).

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16 In "The Venus" Williams describes a woman's ankles as "just suggestive enough of the peasant to be like a god" (*FD* 214).
Empson considers this to be the "essential trick" (11) of pastoral, and there is more to it than the mere equation of the high and the low. Pastoral, like some forms of heroic writing, also makes use of what Empson calls the magical idea of "an identification of one person with the whole moral, social, and at last physical order" (42). Earlier we saw this in Moynahan's definition of the knowable community - one in which the life of the community can be expressed by the adventures of a simple country lass. What we are dealing with are cumulative figures (like Phyllis, or even Isadora Duncan) who take on a symbolic role that makes them literally seem representative of everything else. Mr. Paterson may seem to have this role in Paterson, but his (urban) identity is finally too fragmented to operate in such a way. Instead, Williams's cumulative figures appear to be almost exclusively female. Standing behind all of this is the figure of the Shepherd Queen:

Which is to say, though it be poorly said, there is a first wife and a first beauty, complex, ovate - (P 21).

17"A careful reading yields the realization that however individualistic the women seem [in Williams's writing], essentially they are the same underneath . . . Au fond the females are the same woman" (Nay 46). This attitude, which has been labelled sexist more than once, may have come out of Williams's reading of Otto Weininger's Sex and Character (cf. Dijkstra "Introduction" 37). The argument that man is particular (a "monad") while woman is abstract, general and "without a face" (RI 180) is made in the essay "Woman as Operator".
At the beginning of this thesis I made the suggestion that pastoral lay at the heart of Williams's search for origins, the "source of poetry" and the measure of "all we know". At the end of Chapter Two I located pastoral in what I called the womb of art, a beginning and an ending in the form of an imaginative homecoming or return to Paradise. In Chapter Three the origin of a common pastoral language was found to reside in the "democratic background of all forms" - a knowable community that is also identified as a kind of womb. We have now followed this backward movement to the "ovate" figure of the Shepherd Queen, the dancing country maid who is the democratic ideal.
CONCLUSION
THE UNDYING

For in every man there must finally occur a fusion between his dream which he dreamed when he was young and the phenomenal world of his later years if he is to be rated high as a master of his art.
"The Tortuous Straightness of Chas. Henri Ford", Selected Essays

We have associated pastoral with a dream, a fantasy of temporary escape into a world that literary tradition has defined in terms of the contrast it presents between the complexities of modern urban life and the peace of a simpler, more natural existence outside of the city. Through "an elucidation by multiplicity" we have seen how attractive this vision was to Williams, and how it finds expression in characters as diverse as Joe Stecher, dreaming of his garden in the suburbs, and George Washington, desiring only to end his life in a pastoral withdrawal beneath "the benignant shade" of the "vine and fig tree".

We have also re-discovered the pastoral womb. The womb is a key image in Williams's pastoral, evoking themes such as containment and confinement, innocence and inviolability. It is also used to represent the ultimate goal of our modern quest for origins - origins of our language and perhaps our dreams. It is in this sense that "the sea is our home" (P 199):
Thalassa
immaculata: our home, our nostalgic mother in whom the dead, enwombed again cry out to us to return. (P 201)

The pastoral myth is the dominant myth in Williams's writing, directing his thinking and shaping his art at every level - from the "lay of the syllables Paterson" to the discovery of the dance at the top of Mt. Garret. More than anything else it is what he means by an "inescapable" tradition - something sharing a close association with fundamentally human ways of thinking and feeling. It is the sound of the forest dance, located in a "middleground" between wilderness and town, that he identities as the "undying" - representative of both constancy with the past and contact with one's native ground:

Hear! Hear them!
the Undying. The hill slopes away,
then rises in the middleground,
you remember, with a grove of gnarled maples centering the bare pasture,
sacred, surely - for what reason?
I cannot say. Idyllic!
a shrine cinctured there by
the trees, a certainty of music! (CP2 157)

We have never left that sacred grove at the end of "The Wanderer", with all its incantation of the "immemorial". ¹
Indeed we may still be in the "magic forest" of Kipp's

¹While there is nothing explicitly religious about Williams's pastoral, there is a vague sense of sacredness that he sometimes attaches to the pastoral place (for example, the grove in "Unison"). In the "Adventure" chapter of In the Money that we looked at earlier, one of the children visiting the crystal spring in the forest is moved to remark, "It's like a church, isn't it?" (322).
Woods, or even "earlier, wilder/ and darker epochs" (CP2 319).

The importance of pastoral for Williams can be seen not only in his constant returning to pastoral images and attitudes but in the way in which pastoral provides a matrix for ordering and understanding all of his major preoccupations as a writer: the relation between poetry and the visual arts, the forging of an American Idiom, championship of the local and the belief that "dissonance leads to discovery". A knowledge of the pastoral tradition is essential to an understanding of Williams, not because it allows one to recognize odd allusions, like where the name "Simaetha" comes from,² but because it informs nearly everything he wrote.

In his early poetic manifesto "The Wanderer", Williams asked the question "How shall I be a mirror to this modernity?" (CP1 28) One direction in modernist poetics, represented by Pound, has been to attempt to represent the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (Eliot "Selected Writings" 177) through an aesthetic of multiplicity and fragmentation - "a broken bundle of mirrors". For Williams, the true mirror of modernity is an imaginative vision of wholeness, of unity or

²"Simaetha" is the name of the witch in "Pharmaceutria" (Idyll 2), by Theocritus. In Paterson Book IV Corydon says "I'm no Simaetha" (166) - which, of course, leads one to reflect on the obvious parallels that do exist.
"equivalence" lying beneath a chaos of superficial distinctions. This order is natural, if largely "unrecognized" and "unsuspected". Its home is in the pastoral world.

I think we can see this point being made quite clearly in "The Wanderer" (a poem which also provides a useful text for summarizing a lot of what has already been said). The epigraph for "The Wanderer" could be the same as that used to introduce Paterson: "Rigor of beauty is the quest". The quest that the earlier poem begins with is, as noted, the question "How shall I be a mirror to this modernity?" Modernity itself is seen as fragmented, pointless and chaotic. Williams describes the urban crowd "hasting nowhere!" (110), a condemnation of their misguided sense of direction and purpose. The Muse figure, in contrast, is a figure like one of Bliss Carman's happy vagabonds, a "high wanderer of by-ways" (109), or pastoral pedestrian.

While an erratic and motley character, the Muse is also representative of another order (just as she unites the high and the low: "imperious in beggary!" (109)). Although described as "Indifferent, out of sequence, marvellously!" (109), this is "Saving alone that one sequence/ Which is the beauty of all the world" (109). This sequence which is beauty is the answer to Williams's question of how to be a mirror to modernity, the culmination of his quest. What this sequence consists of can be seen in the contrast the
poem sets up between Paterson and the pastoral world, the city and the mountain (111). What the Muse awakens Williams to, and what he in turn draws to the attention of his townspeople, is the mind's power to recognise paradise:

"Waken! my people, to the boughs green
With ripening fruit within you!
Waken to the myriad cinquefoil
In the waving grass of your minds!
Waken to the silent phoebe nest
Under the eaves of your spirit!" (113)

At the end of the poem the old queen carries Williams off to St. James’ Grove, a sacred place where nature exists in a magically un fallen state:

Deep foliage, the thickest beeches -
Though elsewhere they are all dying -
Tallest oaks and yellow birches (116, emphasis added).

It is within this pastoral preserve, or oasis, that the river enters Williams's heart, its eddying motion establishing a temporal dichotomy between "the crystal beginning of its days" (foreshadowing the crystal rocks of Garret Park, and the crystal spring in In the Money) and the "Muddy . . . black and shrunken" (116) present. The important point, however, is that both rivers - the polluted and the pastoral Passaic - are present to the poet. What the old queen has awakened Williams to is not a pastoral past, but the pastoral world’s continuing presence.

In Chapter Two, I discussed the relation between pastoral and constancy. We can see how the pastoral vision of continuity and stasis expresses that "persistency,
solidity, permanency . . . which through change stays unchanged" (EK 170). It is the undying. It is also Williams's most persistent response to the problem of relativity - the "one thing that the poet has not wanted to change, the one thing he has clung to in his dream - unwilling to let go" (SE 283).

Mary's dance, which must be considered the clearest embodiment of Williams's entire concept of pastoral, has this effect. It is expressive of the living presence of the ancient within the modern, "the undying". By embodying a fundamental human dream, an "expression of instincts and impulses deep-rooted in the nature of humanity" (Greg 2), pastoral exists in a place beyond relativity: the "secret gardens of the self" (A 288), where the music of the eternal dance is heard.

"Dreams possess me" (P 221), Williams wrote as he neared the end of his life. The world of dreams became increasingly important to him "approaching death". Ultimately I believe he saw the world of dreams, the world of art and the imagination, the pastoral world, as both a final end he was approaching and a home he was somehow returning to. It seems inevitable that the womb of pastoral is at last a grave, where "the dead, enwombed again cry out to us to return". The sacred and idyllic clearing in "A Unison", where Williams has returned after "twenty years" to hear the undying music of the forest dance, is really just
an old family graveyard. *Et in Arcadia ego* - "what cannot be escaped" (CP2 157).

Here is the "final somersault" (P 202), the fusion between that first, perhaps prehistoric, dream of escape into the woods, and the dream of the old man "approaching death". This was the true homecoming, one that brought Williams to "the nostalgic sea" (P 199), his own personal version of Washington's retirement to pastoral ease, the unicorn's captivity within the enclosed garden, the shepherd singer's life-beyond-life of ease.

You know I've been thinking a lot recently about the old dreamers, the men who did nothing but loaf - if they could do it. Pure idleness and what the artist does are very closely akin. Perhaps it's my age and my desire to give up all labor - for I have worked hard at times in my life. But that isn't it either. I couldn't loaf if I wanted to. There's another aspect to the damned thing, it's the dream all right but it's to be lost in the dream, to be so taken up by what I term the reality of the dream that appears to me to offer the greatest satisfaction I can imagine. (LET 164)

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3In his *Autobiography* Williams recalls a discussion with the composer Virgil Thomson about the possibility of his doing the music for the Washington libretto. When asked "Who is this Washington? Who is he?" Williams replies "I am Washington" (301).
The argument of this thesis has been rather broad, covering a fairly substantial amount of both primary and secondary materials. As a result there has been, I feel, some neglect of the minute particulars described through close reading. In part this was to be expected from a discussion more interested in myth than aspects of Williams’s style. To offer a bit of a balance I would like to apply some of the argument that has been advanced to an analysis of a single poem - one that I have not previously quoted from or alluded to in any way. The poem I have chosen is "The Italian Garden":

When she married years ago  
her romantic ideas dominated  
the builders

nightingale and hermit thrush  
then the garden  
fell into disuse.

Now her son has taken up her  
old ideas formally  
shut out

by high walls from the sheep run.  
It is a scene from Comus  
transported

to upper New York State. I remember  
it already ruined  
in

early May the trees crowded  
with orioles chickadees  
robins
brown-thrashers cardinals
in their scarlet
cloaks

vocal at dawn among pools
reft of their
lilies

and rarer plants flowers
given instead to
mallows

pampas-grass and cattails by
drought and winter
winds

where now the hummingbirds touch
without touching.
Moss-covered

benches fallen apart among
sunken gardens
where

The Faerie Queene was read to
strains from
Campion

and the scent of wild strawberies
mingled with that
of eglantine

and verbena. Courtesy has revived
with visitors who
have

begun to stroll the paths
as in the quattrocento
covertly

Maybe it will drive them to
be more civil
love

more jocosely (a good word) as
we presume they did
in that famous

garden where Boccaccio and
his friends hid
themselves
from the plague and rude manners
in the woods
of that garden

as we would similarly today
to escape the plague
of

our cars which cannot
penetrate
hers. (CP2 411-413)

The editorial notes by MacGowan provide all the
necessary background: this is the formal garden at the
Gratwick Estate, the "she" in the first line is Emilie
Mitchell Gratwick, mother of William Gratwick ("her son" in
line 7) (CP2 509).

Stylistically the poem has about it that sense of
relaxed calm we first noted in the poem "Pastoral". While
not written in a triadic line with left margins that step
down the page, each three-line stanza regularly falls away
into silence from a long intial line to a final line that is
usually only one word. Within this regular structure one
finds Williams's familiar fading effect of terminal trochees
and dactyds. As each stanza drops from sight it falls off
metrically as well, with words like "robins", "lilies",
"mallows", "Campion" and "covertly" (an effect often
prepared for by middle lines like "sunken gardens" and
"penetrate").

Relaxed ease is also suggested by the use of the word
"stroll" to describe movement through the garden.
"Strolling", with its long "o" sound, evokes notions of
pedestrian pleasure, an activity meant to be enjoyed in and of itself. Like "wandering" and "loitering", it implies the lack of purpose and direction that we have found in other instances of Williams's pastoral. A stroll does not follow a route, but is rather directed by the interplay of environment with the strolling mind.

One of the ways that this lack of direction expresses itself is in a loosening of the syntax. This, in turn, helps to create some very interesting ambiguities. Note the first two stanzas:

When she married years ago
her romantic ideas dominated
the builders

nightingale and hermit thrush
then the garden
fell into disuse.

What are we to make of line 4? The improbably paired "nightingale and hermit thrush" (an Old World and a New World bird) seem to have flown into this sentence from somewhere outside the poem. In fact, I think this is exactly the effect Williams wants to give. The birds are symbolic of nature's presence in the work of art that is both the poem and the garden. They are also in some sense the "builders" of the garden that Emilie Gratwick's romantic ideas have dominated. The significance of this is clear: the garden is the product of both nature and art, the result of the wedding of a mind with all of its natural environment. In the alternative, they represent a brief
flowering of the garden (temporal signifiers), before the garden falls into disuse. That is to say, it is the birds who properly "use" the garden - language that completely blurs the distinction between the natural and human realms.

The mood of pastoral calm is also reinforced by the poet's detachment. Of the two kinds of detachment we looked at in Chapter Two, the first - the physical separation of the work of art from the "world" - is clear enough. The "high walls" are seen as keeping the disease of modern life from the formal design of the garden. The second kind of detachment, that of the poet's detachment from experience (or temporal detachment) is handled in a slightly more interesting fashion.

The poem is also another memory poem: "I remember . . ." it begins after a short preamble. Williams's use of time in the poem is, however, complicated. We might begin by noting his obvious discomfort with "time present". The first lines gives us a history of the building of the garden "years ago". When Williams begins the third stanza with "Now . . ." it seems as though we are going to turn to a discussion of the present scene. But this only lasts for a couple of stanzas before Williams is caught reflecting again: "I remember . . ." What Williams is remembering is the garden in decline, which he describes for six stanzas before bringing us back into the present again with the lines "where now hummingbirds touch without touching". The
next verse sentence is impossible to place. It would appear as though Williams is still in the poem’s time present, but he seems also to be stuck in recollection, remembering a past (or imagined) garden. After this we are given a sentence that brings us back to the present - albeit a present that is defined by its revival of the past (and not the past of history, but the past of art - the "quattrocento"). This prepares us for the final section of the poem, where Williams expresses a hope that the present can become more like the past - that through escape into the woods of the garden we can really escape from "today". Note especially whose garden it is, the possessive "hers" of the final line. This is not William Gratwick’s garden, renewed by his labours and "revived" by his visitors, but the older, original garden of his mother Emilia. In other words, we are not simply retreating behind "high walls", but removing ourselves temporally from the busy present.

It is also a poem that is concerned with tradition. The garden itself is part of a family tradition: William Gratwick takes up his mother’s "old ideas" (one such old idea being that of courtesy, which has recently "revived"). In addition, the garden is the embodiment of a literary tradition - "a scene from Comus", likened to "that famous
garden where Boccaccio and his friends hid themselves.¹

The garden seems haunted by poetry, with "The Faerie Queene
... read to strains from Campion" blending with the

scent of wild strawberries
mingled with that
of eglantine
and verbena.

Note how the mingling of the senses underscores the mixture of art and nature - the music and the poetry flowing into the half "wild", half cultivated flora. The visual or picturesque mingling of art and nature that we have noticed throughout Williams's pastoral (from the houses being "properly weathered" in "Pastoral" and the wheelbarrow "glazed with rain water" to the tombstone half overgrown with grass in "A Unison") can be seen here as well in the "moss-covered benches".

This contrast between the forms of man and the wild fecundity of nature is also seen in the verse. An Italian garden, as opposed to, say, an English one, is considered to be a fairly formal arrangement. The verse itself reflects this in its formal regularity, which is not common to Williams's poetry generally but which is typical of his pastoral. Within all of this formality there is a profusion

¹Williams must be talking about the Decameron, which makes his naming of Boccaccio as one of the "friends" puzzling. Is the author being drawn into the garden of his text?
of nature that Williams can only order by listing (as we have seen him doing in his recital of the flowers in the Unicorn tapestries):

    orioles chickadees
    robins
    brown-thrashers cardinals

This is not the cataloguing voice of Whitman, but rather a lending of form to raw nature's substance (one wonders if Williams was deliberately choosing dactylic bird names like orioles chickadees and cardinals).

This is not to say that the garden exists somewhere outside of the fallen world. It is itself described as fallen "into disuse" and "ruined". Its pools have been "reft of their lilies", as a result of their subjection to the seasons' difference: the summer "drought" and the "winter winds" (yet another allusion to a song from As You Like It?). The garden is also, however, a pastoral oasis that is enclosed by "high walls". Technically these walls protect the garden from the sheep, but Williams goes on to see them as a defence against the outside world, in particular the modern "plague of our cars" that cannot "penetrate" into such a sanctuary (recalling Garret Park's "grassy dens/ (somewhat removed from the traffic)" (58)).

As we have seen numerous times already, we can't have vehicles tearing around Williams's green world. Protected by its walls the garden provides a retreat where virtues such as courtesy and civility are nurtured.
"Courtesy" is a virtue that is often paradoxically associated with pastoral. Book VI of the Faerie Queene, the Book of Courtesy, is an example we have already looked at, but since Williams alludes to Comus, we can take our lead from that source:

Shepherd, I take thy word,  
And trust thy honest offer'd courtesy,  
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds  
With smoky rafters, than in tap'stry Halls  
And Courts of Princes, where it first was nam'd,  
And yet is most pretended. (97)

Williams' courtesy is this same traditional virtue "revived". The "rude manners" that "Boccaccio and his friends" hid themselves from is linked to Williams' appeal for modern visitors to try and "be more civil" and "love more jocosely (a good word)"

We may well ask what it is that makes "jocosely" such a good word. Part of the answer would seem to lie in the way it is used to qualify "love". Normally we do not think of loving as an action performed jocosely. Love is both too serious and too intimate to be made the subject or object of mirth and jest. There are two approaches we can take to this. First of all, Williams' may be referring to "satyric" love, a love that is characterized by good-spirited release and playful abandon. In the alternative, Williams may be interpreting love expansively, to include all of the close interpersonal relationships in our lives. The visitors are not romantically involved, but merely "friends". (This latter seems the more likely position, as
it is closer to the ideal of courtesy that the garden is said to revive.) In either interpretation the important point being made is that love within the garden is healthy and natural - neither frustrated by restrictive social forms nor perverted by unhappy passions. Jocosely is ultimately a good word for the simple reason that to be jocose is a good thing.

One final aspect of the poem requires comment. In the final sentence there is an odd repetition:

Maybe it will drive them to
be more civil
love

more jocosely (a good word) as
we presume they did
in that famous

garden where Boccaccio and
his friends hid
themselves

from the plague and rude manners
in the woods
of that garden

as we would similarly today
to escape the plague
of

our cars which cannot
penetrate
hers.

Somewhat like the "nightingale and hermit thrush" in line 4, the lines "in the woods of that garden" seem to have been slipped in without any necessary connection to the rest of the poem at all. One can only presume that Williams is simply referring back to "that famous garden" he has just
mentioned. The repetition, however, gives us a sense of another garden, or another garden that is in fact the same.

Clearly the effect is of a kind of meditative revery - we are watching Williams pause in contemplation of the various implications of his theme. He has been thinking of "that famous garden", an imagined garden of literature, and reflecting on the relationship it bears to the present garden, a real garden he has visited.

But if we ask ourselves which is the "real" garden we see how Williams has drawn us into the woods, for both gardens are now of a piece, both present only in the imagination. Through an appreciation of and close attention to detail in the first part of the poem Williams has made the jump to a garden of art - a symbol of all other gardens. All nature and all art are contained in that pastoral place - in the woods of that garden.
KORA IN HELL:
IMPROVISATIONS

By WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

Fig. 1 Cover to the first edition of Kora in Hell
From: Roy Miki, The Prepoetics of William Carlos Williams
Kora in Hell.
Fig. 2 The Passaic River (William Carlos Williams)
From: Mike Weaver, William Carlos Williams: The American Background.
Fig. 3 A View of the Falls on the Passaic (Paul Sandby)
From: Mike Weaver, William Carlos Williams: The American Background.
Fig. 4 Seventh tapestry in the Unicorn series
From: Benjamin Sankey, A Companion to William Carlos Williams's Paterson.
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