WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS AND RAYMOND SOUSTER

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS AND RAYMOND SOUSTER: THE POET AND HIS CITY

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis intends to demonstrate the link which exists between the American poet William Carlos Williams and the Toronto poet Raymond Souster. It is also my purpose to examine the close relationship which exists between the two poets and the cities in which they live. The first chapter explores Williams' relationship with the city of Paterson, New Jersey. The second chapter examines the link between Williams and Souster and the influence Williams exerted on the young Toronto poet. The third chapter examines the poetry of Raymond Souster, especially as it applies to the city of Toronto.

The major tenet of the thesis is that Williams was a mentor for Souster in several areas. Souster has followed the lead of Williams in areas of theme, language, simplicity of line, and to a certain extent subject matter.

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Cities, for Oliver, were not a part of nature. He could hardly feel, he could hardly admit even when it was pointed out to him, that cities are a second body for the human mind, a second organism, more rational, permanent and decorative than the animal organism of flesh and bone: a work of natural yet moral art, where the soul sets up her trophies of action and instruments of pleasure.

Santayana, The Last Puritan

INTRODUCTION

The social transformation and rapid increase in urban population in the twentieth century has led to a heightened awareness of social and economic problems in the city. There has also emerged among perceptive observers a moral attitude to the city and urban development. The city is criticized as a place of vice or hailed as providing the promise of a radiant future.

The literary careers of several twentieth-century poets have been inextricably linked to the cities where they have lived and worked. One can not think of the American poet William Carlos Williams without thinking of Paterson, New Jersey. Williams' city became the subject of his five book poem concerning the state of American civilization and the state of his poetic craft. Similarly, the Canadian poet Raymond Souster is identified with the city of Toronto. In Souster's case, the identification is so complete that he resents being "pigeon-holed" as a "Toronto poet".[1] Both poets were born and raised near the cities with which they are identified. Their experience, values and knowledge of mankind came largely from their interaction with their respective cities. Both men view their city with ambivalence.

They recognize that both good and evil are married together deep in the very fibre of the city.

Using their cities as focal points, Williams and Souster attempt to tell the truth about urban life. They endeavour to use a language so close to the language of their urban worlds that their worlds will be understood and revealed through their language.

The purpose of my study is threefold. First, I wish to establish the link which exists between the two poets. Souster sees Williams as his mentor. What is the nature of their relationship and how was the link established? Second, I intend to examine how both poets reveal their ideas and philosophies through an examination of their cities. Are they successful and convincing in creating a language which reveals their world? Third, I will seek to demonstrate that Williams and Souster are concerned with poetry about writing poetry. Both poets, in varying degrees, attempt to change the direction of their craft.

It is my intention to demonstrate that while both poets convincingly depict the ambivalence at the heart of their cities, only Williams succeeds in capturing the total rhythm of his environment in all its complexity. While Souster has many moments of genuine empathy and insight in his relationship with Toronto, Williams' life is Paterson, and Williams is what makes Paterson alive.

In Chapter One I will examine Williams' Paterson in an attempt to show the nature of the relationship which exists between the man and the city. Paterson is more than an attempt by the poet to explore the history of his city. The poem examines the breakdown in communication which has led to a disintegration of human relationships in the twentieth century. Williams is in search of a new language or poetic metre which will facilitate communication in a form which is commensurate with the values and needs of modern American society. Chapter One is an analysis and evaluation of this quest.

My intention in Chapter Two is to demonstrate the direct link which exists between Williams and Souster. Williams had a powerful influence in shaping and directing the career of the young Toronto poet. The older poet provided not only positive reinforcement but also influenced Souster in the area of theme, language, metre, and subject matter.

The final chapter examines the poetic vision of Raymond Souster. While the emphasis is again placed on the poet's relationship to his city, I have attempted to explore the full range of Souster's poetry in order to bring into focus both his similarity to Williams and his own uniqueness.

CHAPTER ONE

In his introduction to the Oxford edition of Tolstoy's What is Art?, Alymer Maude quotes a passage from Tolstoy's treatise which may serve as an approach to the seemingly impervious structure of Paterson.

> To understand any book one must choose out the parts that are quite clear, dividing them from what is obscure and confused, and from what is clear we must form our own idea of the drift and spirit of the whole work. Then on a basis of what we have understood we may proceed to make out what is confused or not quite intelligible. . . . To understand, we must first of all separate what is quite simple and intelligible from what is confused and unintelligible, and afterwards read this clear and intelligible part several times over, trying fully to understand it.[1]

Tolstoy's statement provides a good critical tool which may be used by the reader to penetrate the complexities of Paterson. The local and familiar often provide a point of entry into the more universal and abstract. As Williams states when discussing the city of Paterson itself, "Anywhere is everywhere".[2]

In 1920 Williams published a collection of experimental poems under the title Kora in Hell: Improvisations. In the preface to this early work he commented on the state of American poetry as he perceived it at the time, "'There is nothing in literature but change and change

is mockery. I'll write whatever I damn please, whenever I damn please and as I damn please and it'll be good if the authentic spirit of change is on it.'"[4] His desire was that the poet discover and redisover his world and language exclusively in terms of himself. Throughout his life Williams never tired of speaking out about what he considered to be the "authentic spirit of change". In his Selected Letters, he states, "We've got to begin by stating that we speak a distinct, separate language in America and that it is NOT English".[4] The poet's job is to find examples of the American idiom and put them in poems for all to hear. The recognition and realization of this spirit of change is crucial not only to the people of Paterson but also to the future of American poetry itself. As we will see, the people of Paterson can not communicate with one another because "The language, the language / fails them".[6] Williams admonishes all Americans in the same vein, "We have no words. Every word must get broken off from the European mass. Piece by piece we must loosen what we want".[6] The purpose behind the "authentic spirit of change thus becomes "to refine, to clarify, to intensify that eternal moment in which we alone live".[8] How shall we get said what must be said?", Williams asks near the beginning of "The Desert Music". "Only the poem"[8] is his unqualified answer.

Williams asserted as early as 1920 that, "'It is in the continual and violent refreshing of the idea [of discovery of self] that love and good writing have their security.'"[9] Any poet who looked outside the turmoil of the self to discover the spirit of change was to be anathematized. Commenting on the great poets of the post—World War One era, Williams stated, "Our prize poems are especially to be damned not because of superficial bad workmanship, but because they are a rehash, repetition -- just as Eliot's more exquisite work is a rehash, repetition in another way of Verlaine, Baudelaire, Maeterlinck -- conscious or unconscious -- just as Pound's early paraphrases from Yeats and his constant later cribbing from the renaissance, Provence, and the modern French: men content with the connotations of their masters".[10] This remarkable criticism is certainly at the very least agressive. As Randall Jarrell remarked concerning some of William's more outlandish statements, "Why he'd say anything, creditable or discreditable, sayable or unsayable, so long as he believes it".[11]

On one level we may ascribe Williams's remark to the subjective idealism of a young poet who is out to revolutionize American poetry on his own terms. On another level it is a portent of Williams's early anti-intellectualism which was to grow into cynicism in his

later years. This is particularly evident in his castigation of Eliot, a poet of enormous erudition. Randall Jarrell speaks of Williams's "long one-sided war with Eliot".[12] Jarrell views the creation of Paterson as Williams's final offensive in that war. While no one was more enthusiastic and appreciative of the virtues of Paterson, Book One, than Jarrell, he was forced to admit that the poem degenerated as it grew. In the final analysis, Jarrell states that "it is Williams who comes off badly, at least when Paterson is compared to Eliot's Four Quartets".[13]

In order to interpret the poem it is necessary to realize that when we discuss Paterson, (which was published in five books between the years 1946 and 1958) we are viewing a developing process which represents the culmination of forty-five years of poetic composition.

Williams's career began in 1912 with a series of poetic sketches written under the influence of Keats, Ezra Pound, and Hilda Doolittle. Even before the 1920 Publication of Kora in Hell we find Williams declaring: "'I'm going to stop writing poetry and I'm going to start writing for real; the way I talk here in America.'"[14] Williams' subject from that time forward became the people, places, and incidents from everyday life in northern New Jersey, his home as both poet and physician. Both Souster and Williams share a vision of a poetic statement rooted in the

"incidents and situations from common life", related and described "in a selection of language really used by men".[15] Both poets, in the guise of passive participators, follow Wordsworth in bringing the all important "I" to bear on their respective poetic landscapes. They "at all times endeavour to look steadily at (their) subject", consequently engendering "little falsehood of description".[16] By bringing his language and subject "near the language of men"[17] in his early poetic creed, Williams is sowing the seeds which will come to fruition in Paterson some thirty years later.

When questioned on the use of the prose passages in Paterson, Williams asserted that they were not "anti-poetry" set against section of the poem in verse. "All the prose", says the poet, "has primarily the purpose of giving a metrical meaning to or of emphasizing a metrical continuity between all word use."[18]

Paterson is a poet's quest for a new poetic language which will be compatible with the order of living, discovering, and dying in twentieth century America. It is the poet as creator who is charged with the responsibility of forging this new language.

The "arguements" which Williams appended to the various books are eloquent statements of his intentions for Paterson. He attached this note to the section of the poem (Book One) published in 1946. "'This is the first part of

a long poem in four parts -- that a man in himself is a city, beginning, seeking, achieving and concluding life in ways which the various aspects of a city may embody.'"[19] The quest and the poem are thus animated by a poet-protagonist wandering over his city, following the course of the Passaic River from above the falls to its terminus in the great salt sea. A symbiotic relationship is conceived whereby the poet-wanderer and the city unite for mutual benefit. The poet discovers not so much that he is a city himself, but that by being the voice of its expressive forms, he is indeed an integral part of a mutual genesis and growth. It is the self, his own and that of others, which the poet discovers in his peregrinations. Paterson is, therefore, a celebration of the self, his city, its history, and the poetic metre in the tradition of Whitman. It is not coincidental that Williams writes a short apology for the much "traduced Whitman"[20] in the preface to the final version of Paterson.

For the publication of Book Two in 1949, Williams gave an even clearer statement of his purposes.

> I began thinking of writing a long poem upon the resemblance between the mind of modern man and a city. The thing was to use the multiple facets which a city presented as representative for comparable facets of contemporary thought, thus to be able to objectify the man himself as we know him and love him and hate him. This seemed to me to be what a poem was for, to speak for us in a language we can

> understand if the language must be recognizable. We must know it as our own, we must be satisfied that it speaks for us. And yet it must remain a language like all languages, a symbol of communication. . . . From the beginning I decided there would be four books following the course of the river whose life seemed more and more to resemble my own life as I more and more thought of it: the river above the Falls, the catastrophe of the Falls itself, the river below the Falls, and the entrance at the end into the great sea.
>
> Paterson is a man (since I am a man) who dives from cliffs and the edges of waterfalls to his death -- finally. But for all that he is a woman (since I am not a woman) who is the cliff and the waterfall. . . . The brunt of the four books is a search for the redeeming language by which a man's premature death . . . might have been prevented. Book IV shows the perverse confusions that come of a failure to untangle the language and make it our own as both man and woman are carried helplessly toward the sea (of blood) which, by their failure of speech, awaits them. The poet alone in this world holds the key to their final rescue.21

After the publication of Book Four in 1951, Williams drove himself to complete his Autobiography before the agreed deadline. The stress of a dual vocation plus publshing deadlines precipitated the first of five strokes he was to suffer in the course of the next decade. Physical incapacity forced him to retire from active medical practice and face an enforced sedentary existence. Sensitive readers of the first four books of Paterson might have anticipated the creation of a fifth book. Williams had clearly become so inextricably bound to the metaphor of the chronological growth of the inner and outer cities that the poem could not really end until the death of its creator.[22] Throughout the

decade following the publication of the fourth book of Paterson , Williams came face to face with his own mortality on numerous occasions. His insight into the ways of life and death during these personal experiences provides the foundation for the fifth book of his poem and for his final quest.

Book Five (1958) affirms the ability to transcend age and mortality through the power of the imagination. In the final book of Paterson, Williams celebrates the immortality of the imagination while at the same time admitting that "measure is all we know".[23]

> The flower dies down
> and rots away .
> But there is a hole
> in the bottom of the bag.
>
> It is the imagination
> which cannot be fathomed.
> It is through this hole
> we escape . .
>
> So through art alone, male and female, a field of flowers, a tapestry, spring flowers unequaled in loveliness.
>
> Through this hole
> at the bottom of the cavern
> of death, the imagination
> escapes intact.[24]

Cursory examination of the publication dates and indeed the poem itself would lead one to believe that the work is not unified. It is only after several readings that one realizes that with Paterson, the whole is always greater and more important than the individual parts. What

appears to be disunity occurs within each separate section where the prose punctuations cause uneven shifts and imbalances in the metrical arrangement and rhythm of the whole. Examples of this seeming imbalance are legion in Paterson:

> Summer! it is summer .
> -- and still the roar in his mind is
> unabated
>
> The last wolf was killed near the Weisse Huis in the year 1723
>
> Books will give rest sometimes against
> the uproar of water falling
> and righting itself to refall filling
> the mind with its reverberation
> shaking stone.[25]

The unity of the whole, however, is never in doubt, even with the adventitious addition of Book Five and the genesis of a projected Book Six. The original four books of the poem are themselves divided into three internal sections. The poem itself begins in the spring and ends in the winter. The personal epic is also the seasonal epic, mirroring the twelve month cycle from birth to death. This symmetrical structure is emphasized in the opening lines of Book One and the closing lines of Book Four. Book One begins with the lines

For the beginning is assuredly
the end -- since we know nothing, pure
and simple, beyond
our own complexities.

Yet there is
no return: rolling up out of chaos,
a nine months' wonder, the city
the man, an identity -- it can't be
otherwise -- an
interpenetration both ways.26

This image of the circle "rolling up out of chaos" culminates at the end of Book Four:

This is the blast
the eternal close
the spiral
the final somersault
the end.27

The paradigm of the "seven ages of man" is also made manifest within the structure as we follow a man's life from pubescence to senescence.

Book Five rescues both the male and female principles from the "sea of blood" and oblivion by returning again to the month of March. It is in the springtime, replete with images of robins, trees, rebirth and regeneration, that Williams transcends the ephemeral human life cycle with his celebration of the immortality of the imagination:

It is early . . .
the song of the fox sparrow
reawakening the world
of Paterson
-- its rocks and streams
frail tho it is
from their long winter sleep

In March --
the rocks
the barerocks
speak!28

In Paterson, we are always moving outward in a series of ever-widening concentric circles. We move from the city with its waterfalls, park, and library to New York and the entrance to the ocean. Book Five takes the reader to the Cloisters where Williams makes manifest through art treasures the boundless world of the imagination. The city/poet moves out to the world/mankind, and finally on to the very nature of art itself. The particular becomes the universal. "Anywhere" is indeed "everywhere".[29] Williams' own vision of the higher laws give meaning to all that has gone before and to all that will ever be.

One may even detect an ascending progression of the four elements in the first four books of Paterson. In Book One water predominates; in Book Two earth; in Book Three fire; and in Book Four air or ether.

The internal structure of the poem revolves around three primary symbols. The first is the city -- Paterson, New Jersey, the second is a mountain, and a river which flows from the mountain into Paterson. The third consists of a man and a woman, and the man's thought. Williams introduces the city at the beginning of Book One.

> Paterson lies in the valley under the Passaic Falls
> its spent waters forming the outline of his back. He
> lies on his right side, head near the thunder
> of the waters filling his dreams! Eternally asleep
> his dreams walk about the city where he persists
> incognito. Butterflies settle on his stone ear.
> Immortal he neither moves nor rouses and is seldom

seen, though he breathes and the subtleties of his
machinations
drawing their substance from the noise of the pouring
river
animate a thousand automatons.30

The image of the Man-City is followed by a parallel section in which the Woman-Mountain is introduced.

And there, against him, stretches the low mountain.
The Park's her head, carved above the Falls, by the
quiet
river; colored crystals the secret of those rocks;
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 into
the back country, waking their dreams -- where the
deer run
and the wood-duck nests protecting his gallant plumage.[31]

The river which connects the male and female principle symbolizes primal or elemental thought which lacks a language which will make its meaning comprehensible to modern American man. We are, therefore, introduced to the subject of the entire poem. As Randall Jarrell asks, "How can one find a language so close to the modern world that the world can be represented and understood in it?"[32]

The multi-faceted poet-hero wanders over the familiar external landscape of his own city in an almost picaresque manner, "beginning, seeking, achieving, and concluding his life in ways which the various aspects of the city may embody".[33] Both the man and the city lie in the valley under the Passaic Falls. They share both a

mythical and historical past in addition to a common present. From their common origin the man and the city strive to become separate but interdependent entities. The male poetic principle will manifest aspects of the city rather than becoming the city itself. The various identities and vocations assumed by the poet-protagonist create a composite metropolis within the self which becomes the internal landscape over which the poem wanders.

The birth and the gradual awakening and separation of the protagonist-giant at the beginning of Book One introduces the first of several personae who will collectively formulate the "self" Williams is creating:

> . . . He
> lies on his right side, head near the thunder
> of the waters filling his dreams! Eternally asleep,
> his dreams walk about the city where he persists
> incognito. . . .[34]

Almost immediately, the metamorphosis begins. The giant becomes "one man -- like a city",[35] with a mind alive and sentient. While he remains in the background lying against the mountain or female principle, his alter ego quickly evolves into Mr. Paterson, the main persona of the poem. The power of the giant remains in the background and his bond with the poet is never broken. For example, when the giant urinates into the river, the increased velocity of the falls rings and echoes in the ears of the poet.

In Book One, the search for a new language is started. Williams leads us to an understanding of the need for this quest by depicting the tragic deaths of two people in Paterson who were failed by language at the penultimate moment of their existence. A prose description of the drowning of the minister's wife, Mrs. Sarah Cummings, is followed by a portrait of Sam Patch's death, narrated by Noah Faitoute Paterson, "the old time Jersey patriot", another persona of the poet.

After Sarah Cummings falls to her death in the river, oblivious to the admonitions of her husband, Williams laments -- "A false language. A true. A false language pouring -- a language (misunderstood) pouring (misinterpreted) without dignity, without minister, crashing upon a stone ear".[36] Similarly, when Sam Patch falls to his death, again into the river, Noah Faitoute Paterson asserts:

> Speech had failed him. He was confused. The word has been drained of its meaning. There's no mistake in Sam Patch. He struck the water on his side and disappeared.
>
> A great silence followed as the crowd stood spellbound.
>
> Not until the following spring was the body found frozen in an ice-cake.37

Sam's frozen body symbolizes the rigidity and stasis of the old forms of communication and poetic expression against which Williams is protesting.

The description of the two deaths in section one leads to a profound introspection on the part of the poet

in section two. He ponders the adulteration of language and the changes which will be necessary to clarify the language and make it comprehensible. Mr. Paterson comments on the nature of his task. "There is no direction. Whither? I can say no more than how".[38]

Williams is self-conscious about the use of language and the writing of poetry. On one level we are reading about poetry concerned with itself; poetry about poetry. This theme obsesses the poet in the early part of Paterson.

> Crying out
> or take a lesser satisfaction:
> a few go
> to the Coast without gain --
> The language is missing them
> they die also
> incommunicado.
>
> The language, the language
> fails them
> They do not know the words
> or have not
> the courage to use them .39

And again:

> We sit and talk,
> quietly, with long lapses of silence
> and I am aware of the stream
> that has no language, coursing
> beneath the quiet heaven of
> your eyes
>
> which has not speech.[40]

It is at this point also that the pessimism which will later pervade the poem enters for the first time. We have been divorced from language. Just as every male-female relationship in the poem strives toward union and

fails, our attempts at communication only end in frustration and emptiness:

> They turn their backs
> and grow faint -- but recover!
> Life is sweet
> they say: the language!
> -- the language
> is divorced from their minds,
> the language . . the language![41]

"Why", the poet asks, "have I not / but for imagined beauty where is none / or none available, long since put myself / deliberately in the way of death?"[42] The opening book of Paterson ends with the death of Thought. Thought is, of course, crucial to the creation of a new language and poetic metre. Thought leads to invention and

> Without invention nothing is well spaced,
> unless the mind change, unless
> the stars are new measured, according
> to their relative positions, the
> line will not change, the necessity
> will not matriculate: unless there is
> a new mind there cannot be a new
> line, the old will go on
> repeating itself with recurring
> deadliness: without invention
> nothing lies under the witch-hazel
> bush, the alder does not grow from among
> the hummocks margining the all
> but spent channel of the old swale,
> the small foot-prints
> of the mice under the overhanging
> tufts of the bunch-grass will not
> appear: without invention the line
> will never again take on its ancient
> division when the word, a supple word,
> lived in it, crumbled now to chalk.43

One can sense Williams' frustration when he cries "So much talk of language -- when there are no ears".[44] In desperation, the poet admonishes the reader to "use a metronome

if your ear is deficient".[45] Despite the pleas of the poet, Thought remains divorced from modern man.

> Thought clambers up,
> snail like, upon the wet rocks
> hidden from sun and sight --
> hedged in by the pouring torrent --
> and has its birth and death there
> in that moist chamber, shut from
> the world -- and unknown to the world,
> cloaks itself in mystery -- 46

Book One is punctuated not only by prose passages but also by the image of the Passaic Falls themselves. The falls provide the backdrop for the metaphoric death of language and thought. Williams also uses the velocity of the falls to parallel the pace and the rhythm of the poetry itself. There is a stasis in the mind of the poet which corresponds to the stasis in the language and poetic metre.

> Who restricts knowledge? Some say
> it is the decay of the middle class
> making an impossible moat between the high
> and the low where
> the life once flourished . . knowledge
> of the avenues of information --
> So that we do not know (in time)
> where the stasis lodges. And if it is not
> the knowledgeable idiots, the university,
> they at least are the non-purveyors
> should be devising means
> to leap the gap. Inlets? The outward
> masks of the special interests
> that perpetuate the stasis and make it
> profitable.47

This statis is juxtaposed against the dynamic movement of the falls and river as it flows with total freedom through the outer city on its inexorable route to the salt water of Newark Bay:

And the air lying over the water
lifts the ripples, brother
to brother, touching as the mind touches,
counter-current, upstream
brings in the fields, hot and cold
parallel but never mingling, one that whirls
backward at the brink and curls invisibly
upward, fills the hollow, whirling,
an accompaniment -- but apart, observant of
the distress, sweeps down or up clearing
the spray -- 48

Book Two moves to the Park which is nestled on top of the rock overlooking the city.

The scene's the Park
upon the rock,
female to the city

-- upon whose body Paterson instructs his thoughts (concretely)

-- late spring,
a Sunday afternoon!49

Paterson, Book Two, is an extended interior monologue. The poet is wandering through the park on a Sunday afternoon. As he sees and describes the action taking place around him, his persona blurs and he becomes any resident of Paterson, a masculine principle, a sort of Everyman. The park is the female principle, a type of Everywoman. The water cascading down the falls from the park to Paterson is the life principle which should unite the poet and the park. The theme of divorce is raised again. Robert Lowell states that "everything in the poem is masculine or feminine, everything strains toward marriage, but marriage never comes off. . . . Divorce is the sign of knowledge in our time".[50]

Book Two depicts the failure of love in all its myriad manifestations. This parallels the failure of language and communication in Book One. Lethargic lovers, unconsummated relationships, and pathetic old Mary lifting her skirts populate a world where "The stone lives, the flesh dies".[51]

> but Mary
> is up!
>
> Come on! Wassa ma'? You got
> broken leg?
>
> It is this air!
> the air of the Midi
> and the old cultures intoxicates them:
> present!
>
> -- lifts one arm holding the cymbals
> of her thoughts, cocks her old head
> and dances! raising her skirts:
>
> La la la la!
>
> What a bunch of bums! Afraid somebody see
> you?
> Blah!
>
> Excrementi!
> -- she spits.
> Look a'me, Grandma! Everybody too damn
> lazy.[52]

Section Two sees Mr. Paterson become Noah Faitoute Paterson again as he observes the activities in the park on a Sunday afternoon. Through the eyes of the wandering poet we see Klaus Ehrens, the evangelist, whose empty rhetoric is juxtaposed against Alexander Hamilton's attempts to exploit Paterson's natural resources.[53] Impeding the natural course

of the river is like impeding the progression of a man's natural growth through life. This form of separation also emphasizes the divorce theme in Book Two. Without natural growth and progression the evolution of a new language and poetic metre will be doomed to failure.

While Alexander Hamilton is displayed as a vigorous man of commerce, he is at the same time a manufactured man, devoid of human sensitivity. By harnessing the river for the glorification of capitalist ideals, he will destroy the pristine beauty of Paterson and bring forth the "dark Satanic mills" associated with an industrial slum. Williams' deep concern regarding industrial anarchy and its relationship to the poor and oppressed dominate this section of the poem. This aspect of Paterson prompted Robert Lowell to remark that "Paterson portrays a country grown pathetic and tragic, brutalized by inequality, disorganized by industrial chaos, and faced with annihilation".[54]

Noah Paterson stands outside time, free to walk, overhear, and wax lyrical. As a type of social pathologist, he eviscerates nineteenth and twentieth century industrial America and finds a cancer which will prove terminal. In I Wanted to Write a Poem (1958), Williams states that he has always been "obsessed with the plight of the poor, both as physician and poet".[55]

Left alone after the sun sets in the final section of Book Two, Noah Faitoute Paterson denounces the current

poetry which refuses to seek a new language while it merely reworks existing frameworks: "No / poet has come, no poet has come. / -- soon no one in the park but / guilty lovers and stray dogs ."[56] Without the arrival of the new poet language is static.

> The language . words
> without style! whose scholars (there are none)
> . or dangling, about whom
> the water weaves its strands encasing them
> in a sort of thick lacquer, lodged
> under its flow .
>
> Caught (in mind)
> beside the water he looks down, listens!
> But discovers, still, no syllable in the confused
> uproar: missing the sense (though he tries)
> untaught but listening, shakes with the intensity
> of his listening 57

The closing scene describes a deformed dwarf who can also be linked to the perversion and adulteration of language. Earlier in the poem Williams quotes John Addington Symonds' Studies of the Greek Poets (1873) making explicit the link between human deformity and linguistic vitiation.

> The choliambi are in poetry what the dwarf or cripple is in human nature. Here again, by their acceptance of this halting meter, the Greeks displayed their acute aesthetic sense of propriety, recognizing the harmony which subsists between crabbed verses and the distorted subjects with which they dealt -- the vices and perversions of humanity -- as well as their agreement with the snarling spirit of the satirist. Deformed verse was suited to deformed morality.58

The noise of the falls finally drowns out the admonitions of the dwarf and the poet is able to engage in a moment of solitary introspection, "'Poet, poet! Sing your song quickly! or / Not insects but pulpy weeds will blot out / your kind.'"[59]

The book ends with a description of the divorce between language and invention. The poet is dismissed and told to perform his primary function:

> -- divorced
> from time (no invention more), bald as an
> egg .
>
> and leaped (or fell) without a
> language, tongue-tied
> the language worn out .
>
> The dwarf lived there, close to the waterfall --
> saved by his protective coloring.
>
> Go home. Write. Compose .[61]

The Library provides the setting for the third book. The protagonist, now Dr. Paterson, decides that he can not spend his life looking into the past. The language of the past has validity for historical research, but it is not the answer to modern day communication, especially as it applies to the formulation of poetry. The poet remarks as he is looking through a series of old newspaper clippings, "It is dangerous to leave written that which is badly written. A chance word, upon paper, may destroy the world".[61] Entranced by the spell created by an old newspaper story relating to a cyclone, fire, and flood in Paterson, the poet cries out. He is swiftly rebuked by [redacted]

the librarian for violating the convention of silence. The spontaneous creation of language and communication has been restricted again. The rows of books and the strict librarian suddenly make Dr. Paterson feel claustrophobic. Reflecting on the cycle of death and regeneration symbolized by the cyclone, fire, and flood, the poet repudiates the books which "enfeeble the mind's intent".[62] His mind turns to a female, "a Beautiful thing", who is real and palpable, "out of no book":

> a roar of books
> from the wadded library oppressed him
> until
> his mind begins to drift .
>
> Beautiful thing:
>
> -- a dark flame,
> a wind, a flood -- counter to all staleness.[63]

The flood becomes the focal point of section two. As the waters recede, the land is left amorphous and ill-defined. This relates directly to the quest for a new language and looks forward to Williams's comments on the nature of artistic endeavour itself.

> How to begin to find a shape -- to begin to begin again,
> turning the inside out : to find one phrase that will
> lie married beside another for delight : ?
> -- seems beyond attainment .
>
> American poetry is a very easy subject to discuss for the simple reason that it does not exist. . . .[64]

How to begin? The roar of the falls in the background reminds the poet of his original purpose.

> Haven't you forgot your virgin purpose,
> the language?
> The past above, the future below
> and the present pouring down: the roar,
> the roar of the present, a speech --
> is, of necessity, my sole concern .[65]

There is only one way to begin!

> I must
> find my meaning and lay it, white,
> beside the sliding water: myself --
> comb out the language -- or succumb.[66]

The image of combing the language, straightening it, is repeated on several occasions throughout the poem. We see it for the first time at the beginning of Paterson.

> (What common language to unravel?
> . . combed into straight lines
> from that rafter of a rock's
> lip,)[67]

It is re-emphasized in Book Two by the description of the man in tweeds combing out the collie bitch:

> To a stone bench, to which she's
> leashed,
> within the wall a man in tweeds -- a pipe hooked in his
> jaw -- is
> combing out a new-washed Collie bitch. The deliberate
> comb-
> strokes part the long hair -- even her face he combs
> though her
> legs tremble slightly -- until it lies, as he designs,
> like ripples
> in white sand giving off its clean-dog odor.[68]

Rejecting the library as a "sanctuary to our fears", the poet continues his quest. "I must / find my meaning and lay it, white / beside the sliding water: myself -- / comb out the language -- or succumb".[69]

As Book Four begins, the river rapidly approaches the sea. But the route is by no means direct. The river wanders through New York City, a decadent waste land between Paterson and Newark Bay. While the river meanders, the poet engages the reader in a mock idyll or extended pastoral romance sequence. Corydon, a wealthy New York lesbian, contends with Dr. Paterson for the affections of Phyllis, an attractive but rather rustic nurse from Paterson. Like the human relationships in Book Two, this love triangle is also doomed to failure. No human bonds of any depth evolve. The river comes to mirror the sordidness of these futile relationships. Starting clean and pure at the falls in Paterson, the river has become polluted by the industrial waste of a materialistic, unfeeling society:

> The sea is not our home .
>
> -- though seeds float in the scum
> and wrack . among brown fronds
> and limp starfish .70

In section two, Williams emerges as himself for the first time in the poem. He describes taking his young son to a lecture on nuclear fission.

> You were not more than 12, my son
> 14 perhaps, the high school age
> when we went, together
> a first for both of us,
> to a lecture, in the Solarium
> topping the hospital, on atomic
> fission. I hoped to discover
> an "interest" on your part.71

The father-son relationship becomes another manifestation of the cyclical or circular movement in the poem. In this scene, Madame Curie is depicted as the only dynamic, positive female character in the poem. She is the extension of the female principle first adumbrated as the mountain in Book One. She is also sister to the "Beautiful thing" who liberates Williams's imagination from the library in Book Three. Madame Curie's discovery of the "gist" is couched in terms of physical birth:

> -- a furnace, a cavity aching
> toward fission; a hollow,
> a woman waiting to be filled
>
> -- a luminosity of elements, the
> current leaping!
> Pitchblende from Austria, the
> valence of Uranium inexplicably
> increased, Curie, the man, gave up
> his work to buttress her.
>
> But she is pregnant![72]

The fertility of this image stands in sharp contrast to the sterile human relationships of Book Two and the Phyllis--Corydon-Paterson triangle in Book Four. The splitting of the atom is analogous to the purpose of the poem itself:

> Believe it or not.
>
> A dissonance
> in the valence of Uranium
> led to the discovery
>
> Dissonance
> (if you are interested)
> leads to discovery
>
> -- to dissect away
> the block and leave
> a separate metal.[73]

This statement brings to mind Blake's aphorism from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, "without contraries is no progression". This is Williams' attitude to the formulation of a new language and poetic metre. To bring about a new metre Williams splits the poetic foot in the same way as Madame Curies smashes the atom.

> Smash the world, wide!
> -- if I could do it for you --
> Smash the wide world.74

Whitman broke the old line, Williams can not rest until he has found a new one. The splitting of the poetic line is also analogous to the city.

> Uranium, the complex atom, breaking
> down, a city in itself, that complex
> atom, always breaking down .
> to lead.75

The negative aspect of the "breaking down" is counterbalanced by the love which engenders the fission. For "Love is the sledge that smashes the atom".[76] Williams remains optimistic about the nature of human love. Dr. Paterson's love for his son in this section prefigures the hope for the future which shines forth in Book Five.

After its sordid digressions, the river finally arrives at the sea. But the poet is quick to remind us that "the sea is not our home".[77] Our real home, by process of elimination, must be the city/self with which we began back in Book One. It is within the self that we find the

quality of human imagination. It is the human imagination which is elevated in Book Five of Paterson.

That the sea is a "sea of blood"[78] is made graphically clear when John Johnson, a Paterson resident, is hanged for the brutal murder of two senior citizens: "John Johnson, from Liverpool, England, was convicted after 20 minutes conference by the Jury. On April 30th, 1850, he was hung in full view of thousands who had gathered on Garrett Mountain and adjacent house tops to witness the spectacle".[79] With this image in his mind, the now swimmer-poet climbs out of "the blood dark sea",[80] and followed by his faithful dog, heads inland.

> . . . Climbing the
> bank, after a few tries, he picked
> some beach plums from a low bush and
> sampled one of them, spitting the seed out,
> then headed inland, followed by the dog.81

Although he has been stained by the "sea of blood", he has at least avoided the fate of Sarah Cummings and Sam Patch!

Book Four ends as Book One began:

> This is the blast
> the eternal close
> the spiral
> the final somersault
> the end.82

In this final image, Williams creates a multi-faceted symmetrical structure. The spiral and the somersault relate directly to the "rolling up" in the preface to Book One. Paradoxically, the end of the spiral is at the same

time a new beginning which prefigures the rebirth and regeneration which will be celebrated in Book Five.

Another change in persona combines with a change in physical location in the final completed book of Paterson. The poet has now become "the old man" and has left the Passaic River and the "sea of blood" to take up residence in the Cloisters, a section of the Metropolitan Musuem of Art. The scene overlooks the Hudson River. A new set of symbols impose themselves on the reader in the final book. The unicorn tapestries, flowers, and the omnipresent female principle in the persona of the virgin and the whore merge with the artistic creations of a number of famous painters. The poet's own mortality is also constantly in the background. Dr. Paterson must learn to transcend both the city and the self as he faces death. The key to this transcendence is found in elevating the power of the human imagination, which is the "hole in the bottom of the bag".

> It is the imagination
> which cannot be fathomed.
> It is through this hole
> we escape . .83

The poet asks the rhetorical question

> -- the virgin and the whore, which
> most endures? the world
> of the imagination most endures:84

The action of Book Five takes place in the spring, a time of rebirth. The world of Paterson awakes.

> It is early . . .
> the song of the fox sparrow
> reawakening the world
> of Paterson
> -- its rocks and streams
> frail tho it is
> from their long winter sleep[85]

The vitality of spring leads the poet to re-examine the paintings of the Flemish painter Pieter Brueghel (1525?-69):

> . . . (I salute
> the man Brueghel who painted
> what he saw --
> many times no doubt
> among his own kids but not of course
> in this setting). . .
>
> Peter Brueghel the artist saw it
> from the two sides; the
> imagination must be served --
> and he served
> dispassionately[86]

Brueghel's paintings have achieved immortality because of his creative imagination. Dr. Paterson says of Brueghel's work, "Nothing else is real".[87]

Dr. Paterson evolves at this point into a recognizable portrait of Williams. Actual letters from Allan Ginsberg to Williams appear in the text of the poem:

Dear Dr. Williams:

> Thanks for your introduction. The book is over in England being printed, and will be out in July sometime. Your foreword is personal and compassionate and you got the point of what has happened. You should see what strength & gaiety there is beyond that though. The book will contain . . . I have never been interested in writing except for the splendor of actual experience etc. . bullshit, I mean I've never been really crazy, confused at times.
>
> Adios,
>
> A.G.[88]

After introducing himself through the letters, Williams closes section two by projecting himself imaginatively into the tapestry on the wall of the Cloisters, calling himself "I, Paterson, the King-self".[89] This attempt to participate in an eternal "living fiction" through an act of human creativity and imagination generates the idea of immortality through artistic endeavour. It is "the hole in the bottom of the bag" which will allow the artist to transcend his or her own mortality:

> Through this hole
> at the bottom of the cavern
> of death, the imagination
> escapes intact.90

To emphasize his point, Williams begins section three with a description of Brueghel's Nativity ("The Adoration of Kings", 1564). "It is a scene," Williams says, "authentic enough to be witnessed frequently by the poor."[91] Sexual regeneration and rebirth are depicted with consummate

artistic imagination. The poet's choice of Brueghel's Nativity is no accident. As a physician with a special interest in obstetrics, Williams was certianly no stranger to poor women giving birth in humble surroundings. He is able to empathize with the literal vitality of the nativity scene. Using Brueghel as a standard of imaginative excellence, Williams attacks the poor craftsmanship of the present age, "the age of the shoddy".[92] It is better to be poor and achieve artistic immortality, he asserts, than to be one of "this featureless tribe that has money now".[93]

The penultimate scene in the poem focuses again on "the old man". Facing death, he knows that the creation of his poem will stand as a monument to his poetic imagination after he is gone. This "Everyman" can therefore assert

> Paterson,
> keep your pecker up
> whatever the detail!
> Anywhere is everywhere.[94]

He has slipped through "the hole in the bottom of the bag",

In the final scene the poet decides that we are not ultimately able to know anything but "the measured dance".[95] This measure is surely not only the measured forms of human existence but also the poetic line itself. It is only through experimentation with the "measure" that a new lagnguage will be achieved and meaningful communication will

take place. Williams must comb and separate the boiling tangle of words as they crash around him like the Passaic Falls. This is a difficult task, far more difficult than combing the tangles from a collie bitch. The extent to which Williams succeeds in combing out the old language and discovering a new measure or dance will determine the success of the primary quest in the poem, "Haven't you fogot your virgin purpose, / the language?"[96] The poet forges this new language from deep within the cauldron of the self. It is the poet, shaping and directing the language and experience of the common man, who restores purpose and direction to an alienated and divorced society.

Williams felt that he had succeeded in his quest. He laid claim to the development of a line that was fresh and new; a line with a novel measure or dance. The musical organization of Paterson was evident from the start. In an early review of Book One, Randall Jarrell paid special tribute to the poem's musical arrangement.

> Paterson (Book I) seems to me the best thing William Carlos Williams has ever written; I read it seven or eight times, and ended lost in delight. It is a shame to write a little review of it, instead of going over it page by page, explaining and admiring. And one hates to quote much, since the beauty, delicacy, and intelligence of the best parts depend so much upon their organization in the whole; quoting from it is like humming a theme and expecting a hearer to guess from that its effect upon its third repetition in a movement. I have used this simile deliberately, because -- over and above the organization of argument or exposition -- the organization of Paterson is musical to an almost unprecedented degree: . . .97

Williams remarked many times that the real truth lay within the pursuit itself. Very often the shared moments of human experience and the discoveries made along the way redirected and gave new meaning to the quest itself. This emphasis on sudden moments of discovery shows that Williams' approach to art and life is existential in nature. The parts of the quest may supersede the importance of the shape of the whole. The new measure will evolve naturally from the moments of sudden discovery. As Williams states in "The Desert Music", the future depends on shared human experiences.

> Only the counted poem, to an exact measure;
> to imitate, not to copy nature, not
> to copy nature
>
> NOT, prostrate, to copy nature
> but a dance! to dance
> two and two with him --
> sequestered there asleep,
> right end up!
>
> A music
> supersedes his composure, hallooing to us
> across a great distance . .
> wakens the dance
> who blows upon his benumbed fingers!
>
> Only the poem
> only the made poem, to get said what must
> be said, not to copy nature, sticks
> in our throats .98

Despite the air of pessimism which pervades large sections of the first four books of Paterson, Williams' creative efforts in Book Five repudiate a fatalistic philosophy. At the end of "The Desert Music" he can assert

I am a poet! I
am. I am. I am a poet, I reaffirmed, ashamed

Now the music volleys through as in
a lonely moment I hear it. Now it is all
about me. The dance! The verb detaches itself
seeking to become articulate .

And I could not help thinking
of the wonders of the brain that
hears the music and of our
skill sometimes to record it.99

Discussing the metrical arrangement of certain selected verses of Paterson, Williams said: "Count a single beat to each numeral. You may not agree with my ear, but . . . over the whole poem it gives a pattern to the metre that can be felt as a new measure".[100] The three-stress lines and the five beat lines, with the emphasis on accents rather than syllables form the major poetic rhythm in Paterson. The controlled measure of this triadic stanza is the new language which Williams celebrates. Williams called them "versos sueltos", or loose verses with a variable foot. This new verse form appears for the first time near the beginning of Book One of Paterson.

The descent beckons
as the ascent beckoned
Memory is a kind
of accomplishment
a sort of renewal
even
an initiation, since the spaces it opens are new
places
inhabited by hordes
heretofore unrealized,

of new kinds --
since their movements
are towards new objectives
(even though formerly they were abandoned)

No defeat is made up entirely of defeat -- since
the world it opens is always a place
formerly
unsuspected. A
word lost,
a world unsuspected
beckons to new places
and no whiteness (lost) is so white as the memory
of whiteness .

With evening, love wakens
though its shadows
which are alive by reason
of the sun shining --
grow sleepy now and drop away
from desire .

Love without shadows stirs now
beginning to waken
as night
advances.101

From this starting point the triadic stanza form went on to become Williams' standard poetic line in the last ten years of his life. It is particularly effective in his Pultizer Prize winning volume of poetry entitled Pictures from Brueghel.

In conversation with John C. Thirlwall in 1953 Williams asserted: "The iamb is not the normal measure of American speech. The foot has to be expanded and contracted in terms of actual speech. The key to modern poetry is measure, which must reflect the flux of modern life; for a man and the poet must keep pace with this world".[102] Indeed, this new emphasis Williams placed on measure in the poetic line led Kenneth Rexroth to call him and his achievements "the first American classic . . . his poetic line is organically welded to American speech, like

muscle to bone, as the choruses of Euripedes were welded to the speech of the Athenians in Athens".[103]

The prose sections in Paterson, as stated previously, act as punctuation to the verse and reinforce the colloquial aspect of the language which pervades the entire work. While there is little if any attempt at a repetitive rhyme scheme, the line structure which does exist is conceived mainly as a support for the syntax of the line itself. An example occurs in Book Three when Williams slips into half rhyme or slant rhyme, perhaps borrowing the idea from the poetry of Wilfred Owen:

> There is no ease,
> We close our eyes,
> get what we use
> and pay. He owes
> who cannot, double.
> Use. Ask no whys?
> None wants our ayes.[104]

This type of line structure provides an internal strength which helps keep the long poem moving in a fluid fashion analogous to the falls and river themselves.

In Paterson, there is a process of multiplication and reduction occuring simultaneously throughout the fabric of the work. This phenomenon is reinforced by images such as the circle, the cycle, the somersault, and the constant "rolling" of the river to the sea. This symmetrical balance is further emphasized by the serpent with its tail in its mouth at the end of Book Five.

the serpent
its tail in its mouth
"the river has returned to its beginnings"
and backward
(and forward)
it tortures itself within me
until time has been washed finally under:
and "I knew all (or enough)
it became me . "[105]

The serpent, or river, doubles back on itself, torturing the inner world of the poet. But from this turmoil and identification with human misery comes the knowledge which will allow him to transcend his own mortality through the creation of a new language and art form. ("I knew all, or enough; it became me.")[106] The image of the serpent echoes both the preface to Book One and the conclusion to Book Four. The serpent or circle turning back on itself offers the closest thing possible to a synthesis at the end of the poem. What is possible at the end of Paterson? What else but "a choice among measures".[107] The poet has demonstrated to us that time and mortality can be transcended. In Book Five all the elements of the poem have been brought together. The unicorn in the tapestry, Audubon in the Kentucky woods, Ginsberg's letter, Brueghel's Nativity, and a passage from Mezz Mezzrow's Really the Blues (1925) -- all these and more are intertwined. The poem can move in a moment from one to another, for all exist at this moment in the imagination of the poet. The symbol for this union is the dance. The interacting elements of Book Five circle

around one another in a harmonious measure orchestrated by Williams. Paterson ends with a union of poetry and dance:

> We know nothing and can know nothing
> but
> the dance, to dance to a measure
> contrapuntally,
> Satyrically, the tragic foot.[108]

Williams has performed his reduction to one. This "one" is both the new language and the new poetic line which will bring forth a new poetry in the American idiom. The "one" is also William Carlos Williams, poet, physician, man, Everyman, city, narrator and regenerator who has rescued a society doomed by a borrowed, sterile, elitist and unmeasured language.

What should we bring with us from Paterson as we move on to examine the poetry of Raymond Souster? First, a sense of the poet as historian and social chronicler. Secondly, the idea that the correction and re-creation of language through time is a social responsibility. Thirdly, the concept that "Anywhere is everywhere". Williams's Paterson, Audbon's Kentucky, and Souster's Toronto -- they all hold within them the potential for universality. Fourthly, the quest to redeem both language and poetry for the common man. There is a desire on the part of both poets to make poetry accessible to and significant for a larger public audience. The practical knowledge that a mass readership for poetry will never exist does not make the

quest any less sincere or deliberate. Williams demonstrated that a language and a metre were available to deal with the vicissitudes of ordinary life. Souster attempted to do the same. Fifthly, both Williams and Souster are men of dual vocations. Williams was a dedicated physician and Souster is a banker. For both men, however, writing came first. The dual vocation requires that the poet organize his time in a useful manner. It also speaks to the lack of mass readership in the area of mdoern poetry. It does, however, often allow the anxieties and frustrations which are part of being a writer to be sublimated into the busy routine of a medical practice or bank vault. Finally, a second vocation provides experience in life which can be translated into art.

Williams's best poetry produces the effect of simultaneity. In Book Five of Paterson, various images are compressed into a single spontaneous moment within the poet's imagination. Souster strives for the same effect. Williams and Souster use very little figurative language. Instead, they convey ideas and emotions through the Imagist technique of juxtaposing opposite ideas or images. Something is seen, therefore, explicitly or implicitly in light of something else.

> Like a cylindrical tank fresh silvered
> upended on the sidewalk to advertise
> some plumber's shop, a profusion
> of pink roses bending ragged in the rain --.[109]

For both of these poets, Imagism combines with the use of simple language to create a scrupulous bareness in much of their verse. In poems such as "The Red Wheel Barrow" or "Between Walls", all subjectivity is erased.

> the black wings
> of the
>
> hospital where
> nothing
>
> will grow lie
> cinders
>
> in which shine
> the broken
>
> pieces of a green
> bottle.[110]

The use of the present tense helps to create both spontaneity and a fixed eternal moment. The personality of the poet does not exist here. In this moment the poet approaches total objectivity. When all that is superfluous is removed the pieces of green glass shine forth in isolated splendor. Like the radium "gist" in Paterson, they become luminous. As Williams states in Book Four of his long poem, the function of the poet is "to dissect away / the block and leave / a seperate metal: / hydrogen / the flame; helium the / pregnant ash".[111] The eradication of subjectivity leaves both Williams and Souster as removed or passive participants.

Finally, there is a crucial difference which must be recognized between the two poets. Souster believes that poems are "word pictures".[112] It is important to note that Williams for the most part rejects visual imagery. Williams dismisses "pictorial effects; all that evocation of the image which sewed us up for a time".[113] In Poets of Reality, J. Hillis Miller calls eyesight "the most abstract and detached of the senses".[114] A poem composed of "word pictures" may tend to distance the reader and further separate him from his artistic creation. Williams's poetry often makes little sense if we attempt to formulate coherent mental pictures of his images. An example from Paterson demonstrates the disconnection which results if the images are seen in a strictly pictorial sense.

we know
that a stasis
from a chrysalis
has stretched its wings .
like a bull
or a Minotaur
or Beethoven
in the scherzo
from the Fifth Symphony
stomped
his heavy foot
I saw love
mounted naked on a horse
on a swan[115]

Instead of the eye, Williams concentrates on the ear. He is concerned, he says in his letters, with the "complexities of the world about our ears".[116] "The Desert Music", for example, is really an auditory experience, relating to our

ear Williams's experiences in Mexico. In the final section of the poem "Cassals struck / and held a deep cello tone / and I am speechless".[117] The falls in Paterson constantly roar in the ear of both poet and reader. Indeed, for the poet, this inarticulate roar" is whence / I draw my breath".[118]

CHAPTER TWO

THE LETTER ON MY WALL

Yes, Robin Mathews,
I have a framed letter
hanging on my wall
from a poet in the States --
W. C. Williams
is the way he signed it.

The letter's dated
June 28, 1952,
and was written because
Louis Dudek had sent him
a letter and along with it
a copy of Cerberus,
a book by those two-headed
guardians of hell,
Dudek, Layton and Souster.

And because he was
a special kind of man,
he took a little
of his very precious time
to write me a few lines
of encouragement,
me, a total stranger
whom he'd never met
(and never would),

and the fact that I was Canadian
and living in a place
he'd probably never been to,
didn't make any difference
to him, Robin Mathews,

because he wrote to me
as one man to another,
or even as brothers bent
on the same crazy madness,

and that of course
you'd never understand,
Robin Mathews,
never understand at all,
which is sad, but not
in the least bit regrettable.[1]

In the introduction to her book Interviews with William Carlos Williams, Linda Wagner sums up Williams's influence on a generation of younger poets.

> It was Williams who gave countless writers the encouragement and confidence to continue their own work. It was as if he had opened his mind completely to you, every disconnected fragment that came into his mind. They trusted him, those eternally alienated artists of the forties and fifties, and the qualities of his speaking that remained most often with them were his honesty and, in equal part, his gentle, old-fashioned compassion.2

More than any other Canadian poet, Raymond Souster is the beneficiary of both Williams's inspiration and poetic creed. Writing to Louis Dudek in 1951, Souster lamented the alienation felt by most young Canadian poets of the time. "This is certainly the big problem with Canadian poets to-day; they do not know one another and they are unable to learn from others".[3] This shared experience was essential to the development of Canadian poetry and became the impetus behind the "Poetry Grapevine" or "mailbag". Louis Dudek initiated the "mailbag" so that young Canadians could share their poetry with established American writers. Dudek invited Souster and Irving Layton to contribute their poetic efforts and in the three rounds the "mailbag" completed it reached, among others, Ezra Pound, Charles Olsen, Williams, Harold Norse, and Paul Blackburn.[4] The "Poetry Grapevine" was to be the turning point in Souster's career as a writer.

It was in the spring of 1952 that Souster came under the direct influence of William Carlos Williams. Souster wrote in 1966, "I was not yet ready for Charles Olsen or Robert Creely. Then Louis (Dudek) came to Toronto in May and left me as a gift The Collected Later Poems of William Carlos Williams. From that time on my world of poetry assumed largely its present shape".[5]

The next month the letter from Williams arrived. It resulted from the short-lived "Poetry Grapevine" and remains to this day Souster's most prized literary possession.

June 27/1952[6]

Dear Souster:

I had a letter from Louis Dudek along with which he sent me a copy, the current copy, of Cerberus. He is a tremendously competent poet; his verses make enjoyable reading. I read Irving Layton but try as I might, it does not come off. But somehow when I read you I am moved. I am moved by your subject matter and I am moved by the way that has induced you to conform to it as the very fountain head of your art.

It is not the way that a man speaks that we wait for. A poet does not talk about what is in him, he talks a double language, it is the presence in him that speaks. For the moment he is lost in that identity. And each age is marked by the presences that possess it as its poets are seized by them also, in the flesh, and strut about us unknown. Poor powerless ghosts, their only life is that which they gain from the poets who lend them a life now and then.

We identify ourselves to-day (by our techniques), with those presences which live deflated about us. For, to what we may, it is a technique which we have to understand and to master. Try

to broaden the treatment of the line; you have to know what a line is, what it has to include, when to expand, when to move rapidly, trippingly, and when to plod heavily along. I was happy to see you refer to Olsen. But never forget that you are definitely you. You have a chance. Light and Shadow was the first thing that caught my eye. The Lilac Poem is also good. To an Anti-Semite has it also. There are others. Have confidence in yourself. You've got it.

Best,

W. C. Williams

9 Ridge Rd.,
Rutherford N.J.

The inspiration which Souster gained from this letter was superseded only by his reading of Williams's poetry itself. He remembers vividly that the first poem he read in 1952 by Williams was "The Desert Music". Souster was impressed by the "compression of the line, the precise nature of the statement".[7] He was also drawn to the "musical lyricism" of the poem and the "lack of ornament; the stripping away of all superfluities".[8] As far as the subject matter was concerned he identified immediately with such images as the "form propped motionless, inhuman shapelessness, Knees hugged tight up into the belly".[9] This is a description of the pathetic human figure who provides the opening to Williams's poem. He is one of the "poor powerless ghosts" referred to in the letter; one of those whose plight can only be articulated by the poet. Souster's Toronto poems are filled with such indigents, derelicts, prostitutes, and other examples of wasted human potential.

Souster also noted the immediacy of "authentic language" and the "spontaneity of expression" implicit in "The Desert Music". He still remarks that it was his first introduction to "the poetry of the common man".[10] There was also a powerful awareness that "the actions in the poem were taking place in a perpetual present where all images share a single moment even though they are of necessity sequential in the poem".[11]

Imagism entered Souster's poetry through Williams' influence. In the tradition of Pound's famous "In a Station of the Metro" and Williams' "The Red Wheel Barrow", Souster has produced a number of Imagist poems.

> The six quart basket
> One side gone
> Half the handle torn off
>
> Sits in the centre of the lawn
> And slowly fills up
> With the white fruits of the snow.[12]

Following the Imagist formula, "The Six Quart Basket" concentrates on describing one specific object at one moment in time. The poet is removed from the event. There is no moral drawn, no ideological statement promulgated. The object presents a meaning which is self-contained. Souster's "The Stone" presents the same objectivity in the Imagist format.

Rubbed by centuries
weed hidden
cool to touch
though under the sun

how easy you lie there
how permanent
useless yes
but so necessary!

The length and metre of Souster's poetic line also underwent a revision under Williams' influence. Consider Souster's poem "Air Raid", written during World War II, prior to his reading Williams, "They hum with new life, the black wings gloss and shine in the strong morning air, / As other droppings of murder fall from their stinking bowels." The line is long and lacks control and precision. The soft verbs "gloss" and "shine" in the first line are shattered by the anger of "murder", "stinking", and "bowels" in line two. The lack of balance undermines the implied metaphor. "Air Raid" may be compared with another poem about bombers, written in the mid fifties as a retrospective vision of war:

There, O, there, see how
suspended, how like gulls
of some famous age, side-slipping,
veering, O prancing like colts
let off a rope, whole fields
for them to romp in, Kings
in their mane-shaking youth strength.[15]

This poem, entitled "June, 1945" was written three years after Souster's introduction to Williams. The anger engendered by direct participation in the war has been sublimated and the result is an emotion recollected in tran-

quility. The long, unbalanced lines have disappeared and are replaced by a trimetre pattern. Lines broken off in mid phrase suggest the "veering" and "prancing" of the wild colts. Simile and metaphor work together to produce a synthesis of images. The poet is in total control of his theme, his image patterns, and his line. Souster has listened to William's advice on the formulation of the poetic line.[16] He has learned from another poet.[17]

Souster recognizes a number of other links between himself and Williams. He feels strongly that a poet must write with "a sense of place and history".[18] For Souster, this "sense of place and history" gives "authority" to a man's poetic output. Aware of his role as Toronto's social historian, he compares himself to Williams, who "gave a historical perspective to Paterson, New Jersey, the Passaic River, and Rutherford". Souster remarks that "people are finally accepting Paterson as a vision of twentieth century America". Here is indeed everywhere and the universal can be found in the particular. Souster believes that the readers of Canadian poetry have not yet understood that "the local can also be the universal". He resents being "pigeon-holed" as a Toronto poet, and hopes that the publication of his collected works[19] will dispel the stereotype of "Toronto poet". Souster desires to be seen a poet who transcends local and even national boundaries.

He sees himself speaking to his fellow man about universal concerns such as "love, death, war, politics and Nature in a language which is accessible and comprehensible".[20]

Souster and Williams share a strong anti-academic, anti-intellectual strain. They believe in functional poetry, poetry as an instrument of social awareness and perhaps transformation. Both would agree that poetry becomes functional "not only by making possible direct expression of personal reactions but also by opening up mundane events to poetic examination".[21]

If Williams' obsession was to catch the language as it was spoken and record its unadulterated rhythm and cadence,[22] Souster strives to paint word pictures of his city and its inhabitants. This is one of the major differences in their poetry. Williams is a poet of the ear and Souster is a poet of the eye. As a doctor, Williams had ample opportunity to witness firsthand the vitality of common language. As a downtown banker, Souster travels the inner core of his city daily making mental notes on people, commerce, animals, demolition and human relationships. That night, or the next morning, Souster transposes his mental pictures of the events into a poetic form. He insists that he does not "use regular verse patterns unless they fit the poem as it emerges"[23] from his mind's eye. Souster echoes Williams when he states that a poem

should be written "in the most natural way". This is very close to Williams' statement that "the rhythmical construction of a poem was determined for me by the language as it was spoken. Word of mouth language, not classical English".[24] Again, Williams demonstrates his auditory concern in the creation of poetry.

Raymond Souster is very rarely vehement in his opinions. He is the most gentle of men. But he is adamant when questioned on the hidden meaning in his poetry. He states emphatically: "Do not look for any hidden meaning".[25] Souster is perhaps too quick to assert that he makes "no apology for not appealing to academics by prostituting my poetry with deliberate vagueness".[26] Like Williams, Souster desires to reach a mass readership. Both poets desire, somewhat idealistically, to reach people who lead sterile, impoverished lives. They desire to communicate with both the indigent and the politician. They will become the voice of the oppressed hoping to initiate change. Why this desire should exclude the academic community prima facie is a question on which Souster lacks objectivity. Near the end of his life, writing "Asphodel", Williams comes to the heart of this empathy for voiceless sufferers everywhere.

It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die every day
for lack
of what is found there.
Hear me out
for I too am concerned.[27]

And in "The Desert Music"; "How shall we get said what must be said? / Only the poem".[28] Souster echoes these sentiments in the poem "Dig":

Dig, all you poets,
get your fingers working
down into the dirt,
let's see some wear and tear
on those fingernails.

There's life buried under there,
but you've got to work
just to catch a glimpse of it,
you've got to sweat even more
if you hope to capture it,

or even hold it in your hand
for just a moment.29

Souster's link with Williams is complex. Williams was a mentor and a teacher. But Souster, as Williams reminded him, is Souster and not merely one poet emulating another. Souster believes that the period from 1945-1955 was a time of alienation for young Canadian poets who were geographically isolated from one another. He laments that a stronger communication network was not present among the Canadian poets of that decade. While regionalism can give an important individuality to poetry, Souster feels that it can also create a vacuum which can lead to too much isolation.[30] Williams's letter provided not only hope and

inspiration for Souster but also a transfusion of energy and self-confidence. He had the sense that he was not working in isolation but within a network of people and ideas. It was this connection which prompted Souster to proceed with a career in poetry.

To-day, two tangible representations remain from this link between the two poets. One is the letter enshrined on the wall in Souster's den. The letter is personal and not known to the public.[31] The second is, of course, Raymond Souster's poetic output over the last thirty years.

Williams died on March 4, 1963. But for Souster, Williams' influence has lived on. In a poetic tribute to Williams, Souster acknowledges to the world, and more importantly, to himself, that there is a part of Williams, intimately connected with Souster's poetic vision, which can never die.

A DEATH IN RUTHERFORD
in memoriam W.C.W.

We can't argue the right
of your body to be lowered
into peace:
but nothing else
can be allowed to rot,
mix with dust.
You belong
to so many of us.32

CHAPTER THREE

BE THE WEED-CUTTER

Be the weed-cutter
steaming slowly the lagoons,
working quietly, well,
your blades searching out
a clearer, deeper channel
than has been before.1

"Be the Weed-Cutter" is central to Souster's poetic creed as it developed under the aegis of William Carlos Williams. The "lagoons" in the poem suggest a rural scene. The ideas, however, can be applied to both the poetic craft and the city of Toronto, the backdrop for most of Souster's poetry. Many of Souster's poems nostalgically look back to the world of Hanlan's Point and its lagoons. In this setting, Souster re-creates a pastoral wonderland where the idyllic summers of his youth were spent.[2] The poet is the "weed-cutter" who cuts through the obfuscations of language and the red-tape of corporate bureaucracy with his message about change. Souster has certainly worked "quietly". "I don't do readings or lectures any more. I don't feel the need to assert my own personality to sell poetry. I certainly don't do this (poetry) for the money".[3] Souster has certainly worked "well". Among his many credits include the Governor-General's Award for Poetry for The Colour of the Times (1964),[4] and the City

of Toronto Book Award for Hanging In (1979). Like Williams, Souster has attempted to have his craft "searching out / a clearer, deeper channel / than has been before". Souster's goal has been to produce a comprehensible and meaningful poetic statement which will "make contact with a large and diverse readership".[5] He believes that the primary function of poetry is" to communicate something to somebody else. Not too important what that something is, the big thing is to get it across, make contact".[6] One might ask where the source of this "contact" comes from? Souster would direct the questioner to his poem "Unadulterated Poetry".

> Unadulterated poetry
> starts to happen at King and Bay
> as the four ditch-diggers
> slowly converge on the sparrow
> who's lost all power
> in his wings but a last desperate
> flutter that doesn't keep him
> long away from the hairy
> meat-hook of a hand
> which, cupped, for a moment
> in his prison --
> but now becomes (the miracle!)
> warm-beating soft cell of skin
> whose other name is love.7

These are the ingredients of Souster's poetry. Toronto serves as a backdrop for the unexpected meeting between the brute strength of local government and a delicate and vulnerable bird. For Souster, the bird is both resident and alien. What might have been the wanton destruction of nature by an impersonal force is saved here by the human spirit. Compassion and love motivate the "ditch-

diggers" to gently succour the injured bird. It is characteristic of Souster, the objective observer, to be surprised by the out come ("the miracle!"). In Souster's view, this poem cuts a "clearer deeper channel / than has been before". "Unadulterated Poetry" is a vivid visual description of one moment in time. These special moments occur throughout Souster's poetry. They are analogous to Wordsworth's "spots of time" or Joyce's "epiphanies". In this moment and in others like it a bond of love or compassion is momentarily made between two citizens in a generally hostile world.

Raymond Souster is not a "Toronto poet" by conscious choice. His relationship with Toronto is more one of circumstance and heritage. He says, "my life is bound up inextricably with Toronto".[8] His grandmother arrived from Ireland in 1875. "All my roots are here", he asserts. With the exception of his four years of military service in World War II, Souster has lived in the same area of Toronto his entire life and been employed in a bank in the downtown core for over forty years. He met and married a local girl, Rosalia, who worked in the same bank. This strong sense of community or neighbourhood has become one of the foundations of Souster's poetry. He has watched Toronto grow and change dramatically over the past fifty years. Souster remembers the Toronto of 1930 as "an Anglo-

Saxon Protestant city. It was a city with a rigid social structure and very class conscious".[9] He describes Toronto as "puritan oriented" and uses the well known phrase "city of churches" as an epithet. The great change for Souster came with the war. It was the great watershed. "Immigration expanded and enriched the community and prepared the way for to-day's cosmopolitan nature."[10] The war also marked a watershed in the development of Raymond Souster. The four years of wartime experience were without doubt curcial to his later development as a poet. The experiences provided by the war extended Souster's horizons beyond Toronto and enabled him to focus on many of the themes which pervade his poetry. In his introduction to Souster's Selected Poems, Michael Macklem asserts that "between youth and manhood, the sandlot world of the thirties and the steel and concrete world of the present, Souster draws the thick black line of the Hitler war".

> That was our last year of baseball: the War waited for us.
> No more dusty hours on the diamond, the hand-throbbing sting of the bat
> stroking line-drives, no more third strikes with a round--house curve.
> The War waited for us, to take us, to grind us, at the end of the season!
> O Krycia, Wagman, McDowell, heroes of my youth,
> where are you now?
> And where am I?[11]

Macklem concludes by saying that "if his four years in the R.C.A.F. taught Souster anything, it taught him that might

was seldom right".[12] It is also true that the war experience gave Souster a black and white vision of good and evil. Too often in his poetry individuals like Winston Churchill or large corporations are depicted as totally evil forces. At the same time indigents, derelicts and all manifestations of Nature are viewed with a pristine virtue that at best stretches the imagination. Many times it weakens the poetry. The subtlties and complexities of good and evil and their interrelationships are missing from much of Souster's poetry.

While his setting remains for the most part Toronto, Souster's themes evince the qualities of universality one might expect from any fine poet. Love, death, loneliness, commercialism, nature, sexuality, demolition, war, poetry, and a retrospective vision of childhood innocence are the subjects Souster dramatizes. For Souster, all of these forces operate within the context of the city.

Gary Geddes has focussed on how Souster's poetry is rooted in Toronto and has paid particular attention to the people who attract the vast majority of Souster's attention. Geddes sees the Souster's Toronto "crammed with that city's beggars, pimps, cripples, prostitutes, newsboys, ball players, and architectural landmarks".[13] I asked Souster about his fascination with the indigents and

transients in Toronto's downtown core. "I see in them tremendous wasted human potential. They have been exploited by a non-caring commerical society. This same exploitation could happen to others. Nobody cares".[14] One can sense that Souster feels that he too may fall victim to the same exploitation.

Souster attmepts to articulate this empathy with the victim in "Decision of King Street".

> I watch,
> the beggar with the one leg
> hand holding a pencil
> watches
>
> the woman stopped with her back to us
> fumbling in her purse for either
> a dime for that pencil or a subway token
>
> my eyes
> the eyes of this ragged man
> say together
> nothing else in the whole world at this moment
> is of more importance.15

In this poem, Souster attempts to put himself into the same situation as the beggar. By sharing the situation, he will supposedly examine his own chances of survival under a given set of circumstances. But it does not work here. How can Souster really know what the beggar man is thinking? The poet has lost his objectivity; he has dropped his role of passive participation and has imposed himself totally on the moment. The result is that Souster is not only false to the moment but also false to his poetry.

A better example of Souster's attempt to identify with the existence of an outcast can be seen in "The Penny Flute". Describing the "old man / hat in front of him on the pavement", Souster says "He was not playing / For an audience, but almost for himself".[16] In his poetry, Raymond Souster is often writing for himself and about himself. His identification with those he feels have been exploited by society is only one indication of the autobiographical content of his work.

Souster's attitude towards the changes that have taken place in Toronto since World War II are an extension of his feeling for the downtrodden. His "Demolition" poems[17] show Souster's ambivalence as the old is destroyed to make way for the new:

> The wrecking-ball
> of Greenspan
> of Temperman [sic]
> reverberates
> on King Street,
> toppling steel,
> smashing brick and stone
> to a levelled-out
> stretch of waste,
> on which the sun
> uneasily shivers.
>
> Battering-rams
> O unholy pendulums
> of time
> of change
> of inner restlessness,

as if man
the bored child toying
with his blocks
must as the whim
takes his hands be able
in a moment's flash
to sweep his playthings
ingloriously down.18

"Wrecking Ball" demonstrates the violation of something which is sacrosanct. The "battering rams" are "unholy pendulums". Nature, here as the sun "shivers" at the callousness which reduces time honoured structures to a "stretch of waste". The powers responsible for this wanton destruction are essentially infantile, "a bored child".

Souster is conscious of his role as social historian. He says that "certain buildings are links with the past. They are tangible symbols of our history". These links are important to the poet. "There is a great value here", he asserts. While he recognizes that "both life and the city must renew themselves", Souster feels that "much good is lost through these ruthless changes". He therefore refers to these "Demolition" poems as "elegies".[19]

Who are these people who want only to destroy historical landmarks? Souster does not give specific names but he talks about the "agents of commercialism and the interests of corporate capitalism".[20] For Souster, these are the same forces which exploit the social outcasts in

Toronto. The old buildings are without defence. The best that they can hope for is to take the life of one of their attackers by chance or accident.

> Five men pushing over part of a wall
> four stories up on a building they were wrecking
> at Adelaide and Victoria --
> I was struck by the careful way
> they worked, taking pains not to lose balance
> by putting too much weight against the brick-face
> as it slowly gave way.
>
> No doubt they knew
> the old building hated them and each move against her
> only made the hate greater; a hate lying quietly by,
> hoping by trick or chance, to take one of them
> along to death with her.21

In the face of this inevitable destruction and consequent loss of tradition, Souster feels that the physical structures must unite with the social outcasts in mutual support.

> I can't decide which will outlive each other --
> the old men hanging to the steps of these run-down houses,
> unshaved, unpaid, unloved,
>
> or the buildings themselves, once proudly new and in fashion,
> now breaking up, slow-rotting in their winter of time,
> and stubborn like these old men to the end --
>
> but I'll bet the landlords know. . . .[22]

Souster's villains are not only nameless, they are all too obvious and perhaps unfairly censored. It is probable that these "slow rotting" buildings will be replaced by ones "proudly new" again. This transformation will probably be carried out by Souster's "landlords". These all too obvious villains may create a fresh, clean environ-

ment for the "old men", however "unshaved, unpaid", and "unloved". Souster's world is too often black and white; good and evil. The complex nuances which connect these two extremes are seldom explored in depth.

Souster sees the process of demolition and reconstruction as not only morally destructive but also as a literal destroyer of human life. In "Death on the Construction Site", the greed and lack of human concern for life stands just behind the edifice itself.

> no time either for the chairman of the board
> to press one
> drop of that blood, one piece of that
> bone into any
> part of the corner-stone,
> no time either for his comrades to ask the
> gleaming giant
> stretching up above them: are you satisfied
> with one
> death or will you demand more before we leave.[23]

In "Top Secret", an old building is marked for demolition by a corporate giant, despite the protests of a loyal cleaning lady whose life is inextricably linked to the structure. The poet says "I would guess you spent / a quarter of your life on your knees". The sacrifice, however, goes for nothing. In the end the faithful cleaning lady dies as the building is being destroyed.

> You gave your life
> for that floor, Mrs. Brown, and it wasn't worth
> one day of it; its smug face polished like glass
> only laughed at you from the first
> to the last time. 24

Very often Souster links memories of his youth with the demolition of structures which he holds especially dear. In "Shea's Coming Down", the poet links the destruction of the "giant" to his own adolescent sexual gratification in the upper balcony:

> They go at it so slowly, so carefully,
> methodically,
> That from day to day you'd hardly be aware
> That this giant was coming down, being ripped open
> Disembowelled, violated for ever.
>
> and you and I who made love
> In the upper reaches of this emporium will have
> one memory less
> Left standing
> I tell you, they're out to destroy them all.[25]

The violation of the building is successfully contrasted with the innocent indulgences of youth.

Souster's most personal elegy to the destruction of his city's history is "The Arcade: Wartime". The theme is young love and the action involves a rendez-vous at the Arcade. Souster remembers his anticipation. The sounds of her heels is "matched by the pounding of my heart doing a / crazy dance-step for you".[26] This memory of past happiness is juxtaposed against the actual destruction of the Arcade years later.

> buildings, pieces of ground tied
> so closely
> to my life and my time, all gone now, only the
> memories
> left
> which I take out once in a while, like your
> memory try to bring back
> to a kind of life again.26

Despite the pain caused by these tangible links with history being broken, Souster also realizes that regeneration is necessary to avoid stagnation and complacency. Just as the immigration added a cosmopolitan flavour to Toronto after World War II, new buildings bring a variety to the downtown core which reflects different cultures and ways of life. Like Williams, Souster feels ambivalent towards his city and its progress.

> We will go, you and I,
> to the hated city.
>
> Come in from the lake
> over green-blue water,
> slip between white beaches
> and islands of willow,
> see the morning sun
> proudly striking her battlements.
>
> We will lunch at the Savarin,
> a little later sip wine
> at a place no-one knows,
> much later slowly stroll
> under chestnut trees in blossom,
> Finally ride to our room
> ten magic floors skyward,
> with midnight long gone
> and only the faint click
> of lovers' heels over pavement
> as we take our last look
> at golden lights, shining lights
> strung out everywhere
> in twinkling fairy rows. . . .
>
> We will go, you and I,
> to the hated city.27

This ambivalence not only adds a tension to the poetry but also allows Souster to share Williams' concern for the development of a new poetic line and language. In the

poem "Old Windsor Hotel", Souster weighs the demolition of the old landmark against what may come from its ashes, in this case a new poetic line. Far from the "unholy pendulum" in "Wrecking Ball", here there is hope and almost joy implicit in the destruction:

> crushing against the building's shattered sides
> with an energy crying destroy, destroy
> till nothing remains!
>
> -- if, say, we could build
> the poem with such force,
> such abandon, cross-purpose forgotten,
> if it only breathe and dance!
>
> -- who knows how many
> of the old walls might crack, yes, even fall
> under the smashing face of the line re-born![28]

Here lies the philosophy implicit in "Be the Weed-Cutter". Although excision can be brutal and ruthless, the rebirth of the city as it adapts to its new cosmopolitanism is dynamic and exciting. It is the same with the poetic line. New direction in poetic statement can not grow without the demolition of the old.

Two interesting points emerge from a study of Raymond Souster's "Demolition" poems. First, as a conservative banker in the core of his city, Souster is an integral part of the system he castigates. Whatever else Souster may be, he is no rebel. He does not seem to be able to come to terms with the dichotomy he envisions between the corporate commercial system and the outcast transient population with which he sympathizes. As Michael Macklem

states, "He may not like it (the system), but he tolerates it and uses it for his own purposes".[29] The second point is an extension of the first. The ultimate irony is that Souster professes to write for those who can never read his poetry. The "mass readership" and the new line will be found and read only by the members of Souster's own class. And it is this class which Souster sees as exploiters. What walls then can Souster's poetry bring down -- what real changes can it make?[30] Souster's understanding of good and evil, exploiter and victim, does not confront these realities. Nor is there a satisfactory attempt to face the social, economic, and moral nuances which exist between the so called commercial classes and the indigent classes.

This inability to come to terms with the causes and nuances of evil is also mirrored in Souster's "war poetry". It is not surprising, for example, that Souster blames the Dresden bombing on Winston Churchill and the "Air Force brass". This allows him to avoid the complex elements of human nature which allow man to be inhuman to his own kind. In "Dresden Special". Souster has Churchill comment on the death of 130,000 Germans, "That's the way I like Nazis / Very well done".[31] The evil is concentrated on the head of one man who represents a political machine. Not only is this man responsible for genocide, in Souster's poem he is perversely sardonic about his crime. Surely

this is too simplistic an explanation of the nature of evil and war. In "Chemistry Attack" the poet says:

> and no-one is guiltless
> no-one ever free
> of the blood of innocents.[32]

Is Souster asserting his own sense of guilt at being part of a system which he both serves and vilifies?

To-day, Souster uses the epithets "madness" and "illogical"[33] when he discusses war. He says that "we use war when we run out of other options. Everyone wants to create empires overnight".[34] He considers the war (World War II) "the most impressive period of time in the twentieth century". It is Souster's opinion that "far too little poetry has been written about this historical period".[35] This may explain in part why Souster is presently at work on what he refers to as "a long poem on Dieppe".[36]

Souster admits that it is difficult to be an integral part of a class or system which he feels compelled to criticize in his poetry. To this point in his work, Souster has dealt with this situation in two ways. The first is a nostalgic lament for the past. He evokes in the "Lagoon" poems the time of his youth before he made his commitment to the values of the middle class. The second method is by asserting that one must survive with dignity and integrity in spite of the dilemma. This perseverance in the face of adversity is best represented in such poems as "Downtown Corner Newsstand".

It will take death to move you from this corner,
for it's become your world and you its unshaved,
bleary-eyed, foot-stamping king.

In winter you curse the cold, huddled in your coat from
wind,
then fry in summer like an egg hopping in a pan,
and always that whining voice, those nervous-flinging arms,
the red face, shifting eyes watching, waiting
under the grimy cap for God knows what to happen.

But nothing every does; downtown Toronto
goes to sleep and wakes the next morning
always the same, except a little dirtier,
as you stand with your armful of Stars and Telys,
the peak of your cap well down against the sun,
and all the city's restless, seething river
surges up and around you, but never once
do you plunge in its flood to be carried or tossed away --

but reappear always, beard longer than ever, nose running,
to catch the noon editions at King and Bay.37

It is interesting that the subject of the poem keeps a distance from his city. Even though the city is all around him ("all the city's restless, seething river / surges up around you") and he depends for his livelihood on an exchange with this "seething river", he remains separate. "Never once / do you plunge in its flood to be carried or tossed away -- ". Souster seems to indicate that survival depends on this separateness. But what knowledge and experience might be gained from plunging into flood of the "seething river"? What new perspective might be gained? Is Souster really the one who reappears always at "King and Bay"? There is a certain safety in distance. But a new perspective may be uncovered if one is willing to be a risk taker.

In "Like the Last Patch of Snow", the same survival instinct is evinced:

> That's the way
> we've got to hang on --
>
> like the last patch of snow
> clinging to the hillside
> crouching at the wood edge
> with April done
>
> dirty-white
> but defiant
>
> lonely
> fighting death.[38]

In the never ending cycle of destruction and creation in the city with its apparent indifference to its lonely outcasts, Souster suggests that survival and a dignity in facing death is the best one may hope for. The ambivalence which Souster feels toward his city and its systems is given clear focus in "Sleep Toronto" and "The City Called a Queen".

> Sleep city sleep
> push the last dead drunks into the cells of oblivion,
> chase the last chilled street-walker back to her rooming-house,
> bed the last derelict in the overnight cot of the mission;
>
> then sleep from the putrid Don to the puny Humber,
> sleep from Hog's Hollow all the way to the lake cold and dark,
> sleep down in Cabbagetown, sleep up in Forest Hill,
> sleep soundly on the beds of gold, the bunks of hunger.
>
> Sleep on, knowing well you're both spendthrift and miser,
> bigoted, hypocrite, little wise, much foolish,
> sleep with the dreams of profits, mergers, margins,
> sleep with the dreams of garbage-dump and dole.
>
> Sleep city sleep
> your Yonge Street narrow as the hearts that own you.[39]

Strange city,
cold, hateful city,
that I still celebrate and love
while out there somewhere
you are carefully working at my death. . . .[40]

Souster's love poems also demonstrate an ambivalence towards their subject. Frank Davey has stated that "sexuality is a theme Souster can not deal with successfully".[41] This sexual reticence can be demonstrated in the early poem entitled "The Hunter":

I carry the groundhog along by the tail
on the way back to the farm, the blood slowly dripping
from his mouth one or two drops at a time,
leaving a perfect trail for anyone to follow.

Your half-wit hired man
is blasting imaginary rabbits
far off to our left, while you and I move on
through fields steaming after rain,
jumping each mud patch.

As I walk I can't help noticing
the swing of your girl's hips ahead of me,
that and the proud way your hand
holds the shotgun

And remembering how you held it
up to the limp hog caught in the trap
and blew his head off --
wonder now what fate
you may have in store for me.[42]

Louis Dudek has written a great deal about "The Hunter". In fact, Dudek considers this poem the key to Souster's poetry. He points vividly to the sexual ambivalence which underlines the poem.

> Let's go back to 'The Hunter' to study Souster's ambivalence about sex. On the one hand, we have the girl, masterful and desirable: 'watching the swing of your girl's hips / ahead of me' (sexually ahead of the speaker, perhaps). Yet at the same time she is the ruthlessly cruel female. The poet ruefully and ironically studies his strange fear of her. This mixture of desire and fear is a keynote of Souster's personality; or rather, the opposition of love and cruelty, the twin poles of his sensibility, is the dramatic centre of his poetry. The 'half-wit hired man' is a further projection of mindless violence toward the weak and timid -- 'rabbits'. But most significant of all, the groundhog, the victim of ruthlessness (on the part of the woman), and explicitly partner-in-fate to the lover, is being dragged by the tail, the blood 'dripping from his mouth a couple of drops at a time'. It is certainly a trail to follow.43

The groundhog is, of course, the poet or "Weed Cutter" as well as the subservient emasculated male in the relationship. In a later poem, Souster asserts "Groundhog's My Nature".

> Groundhog's my nature:
> hole up deep in winter,
> walk cautious above ground
> in spring and summer:
> leave a piece
> of arm or leg
> and a smear of blood
> in the crafty hunter's trap
> just to hold his interest.44

Both poems demonstrate that it is impossible to emerge unscathed from a love affair. While he celebrates love as the "central experience of innocence",[45] Souster has no illusions about the difficulties involved in co-habitation. These difficulties are accentuated in Souster's poetry because the male is usually subservient and the female is usually dominant.

When asked to comment on Williams' presentation of love in Paterson, Souster stated that "Williams was too pessimistic about love. I do not share that pessimism but one can not expect too much from love".[46]

One must not be seduced into thinking Souster is optimistic about love. While he does examine the ecstasy of sexual union in his poetry, it is his concentration on the fear, anxiety, and insecurity regarding the initiation of the act which remains with the reader. Very often this anxiety leads Souster into the realm of voyeurism as a passive participant:

> Perhaps because I've had so much of my loving
> in the shadows of nighttime parks, on the cold-lipped sands
> of beaches,
> anywhere two bodies could lie, be close together,
> so hands could reach out to feel the fond, desired flesh
> O anywhere under sweep of trees, with the smell of grasses,
> that each could know earth's nearness, mute sympathy,
> sense her wind-whispered blessing, and not be afraid
> of the peeping-tom public eye, with all the polared thoughts
> of its steadily shrivelling inch of mind, never easily measured --
>
> Perhaps because of all of this
> I feel a firm kinship, like brother to sister,
> for these young bodies sprawled out here tonight
> in the lie of their loving: know the leg-curled tightness, the
> soft roundness of them,
> the sweet torture that transforms them, that pushes them high
> above
> drab work at the office, banal situations, all the long, empty
> hours of their lives --
>
> and walk past them quietly, a little wistfully, looking straight
> ahead,
> each echo of my footsteps seeming to sound out alone, alone. . . .[47]

While there is pleasure to be experienced by the poet in his involvement with the young lovers, there is also the pain of loneliness and separation.

Some of the love poems convey a sense of maternal protection from an alien hostile world. These poems, unfortunately, are often maudlin and seldom transcend the level of cliché.

> I have come into my port again,
> Home from weathering the storms,
> In from that sea crueler
> Than actual ocean's ceaseless battering,
> More treacherous than any cornered snake.
>
> I have slid into anchor noiselessly
> And now the waters of your body under mine
> Lie still and untroubled, knowing peace
> And the long voyage is over.[48]

Other love poems depict a sense of marvel or wonder at the power of female sexuality. In an obviously heliocentric universe, Souster has lines like "Your warm sun circling / my earth of amazement".[49] A reading of Souster's love poetry leaves little doubt that the female is the controlling force in a relationship.

This sense of wonder can fade to a passive indifference when the reality of the dominant-submissive relationship is finally driven home. Many of Souster's shorter poems, such as "The Marriage Bit", make effective use of contrast. Here, the juxtaposition of nuptial love and the reality of married life is presented:

The mad sudden blasting
of horns from the cars
in the wedding procession
going by the house

almost drowns out
the way they're standing
in the kitchen screaming
screaming at one another.[50]

It is as if Souster finds great difficulty in reconciling the ideal vision of love from his youth with his present position as "groundhog".

The sexual act and the commitment involved therein can be physically emasculating for the male partner in a relationship. In "The Mating Season", a poem far more literal and horrible than "The Hunter", the female partner severs the limbs of her male companion and then laments that she has married a cripple:

Lack of suppleness in his legs
gave them trouble love-making.

What to do?

Why not cut them off
she said, half-joking,
half-seriously.

Which he immediately did,
The fool.

Now in bed
when he inches over with his stumps,
she turns her back on him.

Ugh, she murmurs,
to think that I
with all my beauty
should have ended up marrying a cripple![51]

The sexual frustrations experienced by the couple is evident at the beginning of the poem. In an act of

self-mutilation, the male amputates his legs in an attempt to ingratiate himself with a whoman who holds him in contempt. His act only confirms his subservience. His reward for his sacrifice ("The fool.") is a cynical and unfeeling rejection by his mate. The poem reveals Souster's fear of the capricious and duplicitous nature of the female sex. Entering a relationship in a subservient role can only lead to physical and emotional castration and impotence. This is perhaps why Souster very often chooses to become the voyeur, the passive observer who can not only fantasize with impunity but also wreak his revenge without fear of suffering himself. Two poems, one early and one recent, display this voyeuristic urge. In the first, "The Uncouth Poem", the title itself gives an indication of the guilt which the poet-voyeur feels in approaching love and sex in this manner:

> Hair colour of the sun,
> breasts high and pressing forward
> beneath the black-as-death sweater,
> hips perhaps a little wide
> (after thirty-seven years
> and some child-bearing),
> under the pants kids wear now.
>
> But more than enough there
> that if I could have known her
> fifteen years ago,
>
> I'd have lain awake nights
> inventing sneaky ways
> of removing those pants,
> that devil's-own sweater,
>
> (though not necessarily
> in that order).52

Even in his fantasy, there is still the hint of fear as the poet contemplates the breasts which are concealed under "the black-as-death sweater".

In a much later poem, "The Temptation", the desire for revenge and destruction has become ever more powerful. It is even vicious. One can not help remembering Browning's "Porphyria's Lover":

> With all that hair
> stretching easily to her waist
>
> the inevitable temptation --
> to slowly tighten it
> around the bitch-soft neck.[53]

Part of the reason that many of Souster's love poems display a cynical ambivalence toward their subject may be explained by the poet's belief in love being the province of youth. It is in the nostalgic explorations of youth and innocence that love becomes a thing of beauty in Souster's vision. But again, the problem is that the poet, in middle age, believes that he can only experience this love as a passive participant or even worse an unwanted intruder. Like the newspaper man in "Downtown Corner Newsstand", he has never been able to risk plunging into the flood for fear of being "carried or tossed away".[54] Ironically, his reticence has insured that his participation will never be more than passive.

The poem "Young Girls" depicts a utopian world of innocence where chaste, Diana-like maidens who are associated with nature parade before the admiring glances of the boys. The boys, of course, are "unable to keep / control of those subterranean fires". The contrast between the ethereal nature of the girls and the hot lust of the boys gives the poem an effective tension without removing it from the world of innocence:

> With night full of spring and stars we stand
> here in this dark doorway and watch the young
> girls pass, two, three together, hand in hand.
> They are like flowers whose fragrance hasn't sprung
> or awakened, whose bodies now dimly feel
> the flooding, upward welling of the trees;
> whose senses, caressed by the wind's soft fingers, reel
> with a mild delirium that makes them ill at ease.
>
> They lie awake at night, unable to sleep,
> then walk the streets, kindled by strange desires;
> they steal lightning glances at us, unable to keep
> control upon those subterranean fires.
> We whistle after them, then laugh, for they
> stiffen, not knowing what to do or say.55

The sense of alienation deepens in poems like "Wedding Reception" where the separation between the young and the old is painfully clear.

> The old ones sit in the corner
> smiling remembering
> through a haze of years
> through the maze of heart-break and laughter
> <u>their</u> time and <u>their</u> youth <u>their</u> wedding-day.[56]

The repetition and underscoring of "<u>their</u>" in the final line emphasizes layers of bitterness and frustration which passive participation have engendered over the years.

The poems which present Souster as an intruder on the love scene became increasingly frequent in his later poetry. In "Lovers, Dominion Square", the poet rationalizes his desire to get out of the rain by painting a word picture of "the tavern's warm heart -- all its steaming food, / sparkling wine, and music of the violin".[57] It later becomes clear, however, that his real reason for vacating the square is his intrusion on a young couple walking through the rain.

> They seem as much a part of the rain
> as the policeman on the corner with the white cape
> and white rubber boots to the thighs,
> standing in the streaming traffic's centre
> and directing with an effortless hand.
>
> They seem almost part of the night, these two lovers,
> with their slow, lingering steps, their total unawareness
> of everything in this city but their love,
> the strength, the honest lust in their bodies touching
> as they walk across the square. . . .[58]

In "Young People Dancing", Souster turns away at the end of the poem feeling estranged and "suddenly /unaccountably old".[59]

The poet's attempts to deal with love and sexuality become more poignant because he sees himself as an outsider. Within the nuptial relationship Souster depicts the male as subservient and emasculated. His position as an outsider or intruder in many of the love poems engenders voyeurism and vicarious participation. The frustration felt by the poet at his situation leads him to desire revenge against

females; albeit a fantasy revenge. Sometimes he is forced to look nostalgically at young love and a state of innocence which is now forever behind him. As Michael MacKlem points out, making love is "an archetypal experience"[60] for all mankind. Souster, it appears, must describe this experience from the outside; not as a participant but as a passive and less than objective observer. There is a palpable pain and loneliness on the part of the poet as he describes his embarrassment in poems like "The Intruder".

> In another two minutes
> they'd have been at each other
>
> in another minute
> the jeans she was wearing finally down. . . .
>
> But I, the intruder,
> had to walk in on them,
>
> I, the stranger, enter
> their kingdom of the woods,
>
> catch them with the lazy look
> of loving glazed in their eyes --
>
> then as I crashed away
> down the path, their laughter
> mocking, yet tender,
> followed me, biting
> at the tips of my heels.[61]

Despite the mocking contempt which bites at the poet's heels as he retreats, Souster is drawn back to this voyeurism again and again. Not only has Souster impinged on the privacy of the young couple in "The Intruder", he has also aborted the "archetypal experience" MacKlem speaks about. This is certainly a perverse type of revenge.

The poet is punished, or punishes himself by making an ignominious retreat to the sound of mocking laughter. One is reminded of D. H. Lawrence's feelings at the end of his poem "Snake":

> And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
> Of life.
> And I have something to expiate:
> A pettiness.62

Reading Souster's love poem one feels that Lawrence's words might serve as an epitaph for Souster's attempts to deal with sexuality in the male-female relationship. There is a failure to connect the past with the present. Souster, in looking back nostalgically to young love which germinates in innocence, attempts to make that idealized vision a panacea for the tensions of modern urban life. But the ideal vision can not be extended into contemporary reality. Corporate commerce, the military machine, and human sexuality overpower the idealized utopian vision. All attempts at connection are doomed to failure. The same message has been promulgated by Melville in Billy Budd (1891) and by Dostoyevsky in The Idiot (1869). Pure innocence is inevitably destroyed when it is brought into contact with the world of experience. A compromise would therefore seem necessary on Souster's part. Rather than continue to feel the pain and isolation of an intruder, Souster might attempt to retain his adult perspective while he celebrates young love. He must come

to believe that young love is transitory and can not be merely extended into an idealized vision of adult sexuality.

In Book Five of Paterson, Williams celebrates the power of the imagination. It is

> Through this hole
> at the bottom of the cavern
> of death, the imagination
> escapes intact.63

When Raymond Souster experiences a flight of imagination which lifts him above the turbulence of commerce, bureaucracy, and sexuality, he writes his finest poetry. The best example of this leap of the imagination can be seen in one of his finest poems, "The Flight of the Roller-Coaster". Souster not only makes a fantastic experience feel immediate and spontaneous in this poem, but he also makes the reader feel that the supernatural is only a short extension from our everyday world.

> (Old Sunnyside Beach, Toronto)
>
> Once more around should do it, the man confided . . .
>
> and sure enough, when the roller-coaster reached the peak
> of the giant curve above me, shrill screech of its wheels
> almost drowned out by the shriller cries of its riders --
>
> instead of the dip, then the plunge with its landslide of screams,
> it rose in the air like a movieland magic carpet, some
> wonderful bird,
>
> and without fuss or fanfare swooped slowly above the
> amusement-park,
> over Spook's Castle, ice-cream booths, shooting-gallery;
> then losing no height made the last yards across the beach,
> where its brakeman cucumber-cool in the last seat solemnly
> saluted
> a lady about to change to her bathing-suit:

ending up, as many witnesses reported later,
heading leisurely out above the blue lake water,
to disappear all too soon behind a low-flying flight of clouds.[64]

Amusement in the conventional world may be simply a matter of escaping from Souster's ambivalent feelings regarding the systems in which he finds himself enmeshed. But in "The Flight of the Roller-Coaster" amusement is far outside a conventional definition. When the roller-coaster takes flight there is a corresponding uplift in the poet's choice of language. Starting with "swooped", we are lifted along with the imaginative vision of the poet and kept aloft with accented syllables such as "Spooks", "booths", "shooting", "losing", "cucumber-cool", and "too soon". There is skill behind the choice of language and its relation to the theme and mood of the poem. Here is Souster at the height of his powers. And it is important to note that he has not placed himself on the roller-coaster, but is content to revel in the creation of the imaginative vision itself.

Souster is also at his best as the detached but meticulous observer of a special moment in time. This is a strength which he shares with Williams. Like him, Souster possesses the ability to make spontaneous the entire experience related in the poem. As Frank Davey states, "there is a blurring of the distinction between the act of writing and the act of reading".[65] When Souster launches

into a perceptual experience the reader is immediately drawn into the process by visual recognition.

> A bird with a berry
> big as its head tries
> to carry it across
> the back grass, gets halfway
> then drops it.[66]

Poems like "Ambition" are similarly based on a spontaneous perception by the poet which is passed on in tact to the reader:

> To look at the world
> and all things in it
>
> as wide-eyed
> amazed
> full of wonder
>
> as Max
> my fur-ball
> my endless tail
>
> cat of pure joy![67]

In incidental poems such as "Ambition", Souster can celebrate with a joy that is unencumbered by the world of commerce, war or sexuality. Souster's "Max" is strikingly similar to Williams's "Kitten" in Book Four of Paterson.

> Love is a kitten, a pleasant
> thing, a purr and a
> pounce. Chases a piece of
> string, a scratch and a mew
> a ball batted with a paw
> a sheathed claw .[68]

Both images are spontaneous celebrations of a moment captured in time.

Another impressive characteristic about the poetry of Raymond Souster is its honesty and sincerity. These qualities are certainly present in the man. They manifest themselves in the poetry in a directness and understatement of language as well as in the colloquial simplicity of diction and syntax. This is complemented by unobtrusive rhyme schemes and rhythms which allow Souster to write some excellent poetry which appears like normal conversation. A poem which begins with a line like "When I was a kid, nine or ten years old", not only sounds like an overheard conversation but also invites the reader to share in an intimate yet unpretentious experience. Again a comparison with Williams presents itself. The desire to record the speech of ordinary men as it arises in daily conversation owes a debt to Wordsworth. Souster is not familiar with either Wordsworth's poetry or the "Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads", but in many ways he has intuited Wordsworth's pronouncements. In a poem like "Tell the Little Girl" one sees a statement which is colloquial in form, minimal in length, presenting a realistic attitude to the problem of a child attempting to comprehend death:

Tell the little girl
her grandad is dead,

and she'll answer you,
"That's too bad,
but when's he coming back?"[69]

The simplicity of the statement made in this poem is strikingly close to Wordsworth's "We are Seven". Souster is surely following Wordsworth and Williams here in using "the language near to the language of men".[70] It is achieved by "fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation".[71] Souster is also following the Wordsworthian dictum "that the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling".[72] In these incidental poems it is a sign of Souster's strength as a poet that he can encourage an empathetic response from his reader while maintaining complete emotional detachment himself.

Souster also shares a pastoral impulse with Wordsworth. Souster's poems abound with the squirrels, cats, starlings, and groundhogs which appear around his home. Nature and her creatures represent for Souster an extension of the world of peace and innocence he explores in his celebrations of youth in the "Lagoon" poems. Souster asserts, "Nature is particularly special when it is found within the city. The trees, skunks, lilacs, and the flowers growing out of the pavement counterbalance the

forces which would only build skyscrapers",[73] The trees and small animals provide Souster with material for many of his incidental poems. While these poems celebrate Nature, they also make it clear that elements of Nature face great danger at the hands of urban forces. In "The Rooster in the City" urbanization brings about complacency:

> Since he's moved to the city
> this rooster's gone all to hell:
> sleeps in until nine,
> then out on the back fence
> to face the east
> and salute the dawn
> three hours too late.74

In "Another Tree Lost" the threatening forces are human:

> No, it wasn't enough
> that they started out cutting
> the many arms, then hacked away
> at the feet,
> so it fell in agony --
>
> now today look at them,
> father and son
> with a two-handled rip-saw
> cutting the body up
> into smaller pieces.
>
> And no doubt they'd say
> if you asked them:
> when you decide to kill
> you might as well make
> a good job of it.75

Despite these real threats to Nature in the urban environment, Souster can still experience a kind of epiphany in the contemplation of a butterfly:

> The beautiful striped butterfly
> made a slow wandering pass
> over the garden, no screaming engine
> leaving a madman's whistle being it,
> a show-off trail of vapour.
> Instead,
> noiselessly, effortlessly it fluttered
> on its aimless, summer-easy way,
> and for a moment all the world
> stopped breathing with me as we watched it
> climb suddenly and disappear
> behind the empty-handing lilac bushes.[76]

While Nature is not an adequate defense against time, change, or the aging process, it can and does in Souster provide special moments of peace and harmony.

Souster has worked quietly in his career as the weed-cutter. Despite his low profile, he has earned many honours and awards in recognition of his contribution to Canadian poetry. He remains bitter, however, at what he perceives to be a lack of recognition from what he terms "the so called academic community".[77] This perception seems to lie at the root of Souster's fervent anti-academic posture. His defensive stance may also be heightened by his own lack of formal education. For those who know Souster as a friend, however, the reasons may lie elsewhere. Williams too was staunchly anti-academic. In a way Souster is following his mentor here. Both poets are outsiders to the academic community and Souster's anxiety and ambivalence as an outsider dealing with systems has already been noted. The nature of Souster's colloquial

language and his assertion that "the poem means just what it says, no more, no less"[78] may cause some academics to take him at his word and not pursue the matter. This Souster may interpret as rejection. Souster is not content to merely adopt an attitude of indifference towards academics and critics. In his anger he can not resist vilifying them.

> Go pick your nose
> over someone else's verse,
>
> saving all your snot
> to write your own epitaph.[79]

As mentioned before, the irony resides in the fact that Souster is castigating the very group which comprises his largest audience. The mass readership he seems to envision for his poetry simply does not exist.

In his introduction to Ten Elephants on Yonge Street, he states, "I like to think that I'm talking out my poems rather than consciously dressing them up in the trappings of the academic tradition".[80] In the same introduction his poetic creed first adumbrated in "Be the Weed-Cutter" is restated:

> Whomever I write to, I want to make the substance of the poem so immediate, so real, so clear, that the reader feels the same exhilaration -- be it fear or joy -- that I derived from the experience, object, or mood that triggered the poem in the first place.[81]

Are these statements which academics would repudiate? Does writing poetry with this philosophy preclude an academic audience? One would certainly think not. Souster's attacks on the critics and academics remain, however, as

vicious as the animal imagery which he uses to launch them. Witness a recently published poem entitled "The Critic of Poetry":

> You are the dog
> who, having eaten
> his own very fresh vomit,
>
> can't help licking his lips.[82]

As early as 1940 Souster was scolding other Canadian poets for not breaking away from tradition and writing poetry outside the aegis of the academic community.

> Come, my little eunuchs, my tender virgins,
> it's high time you were home and in bed.
> The wind's cold and strong in the streets now,
> and it's almost ten o'clock.
>
> Soon whores will be obvious at corners,
> and I wouldn't want you accosted or given the eye;
> soon drunks will be turned out of beverage rooms
> and you could be rolled or raped up a dark lane.
>
> So quickly find your houses, turn the latch-key, set the night-lock,
> remember to dress with the blinds down. Then safe in bed you may dream
> of Pickthall walking hand in hand with her fairies,
> of Lampman turning his back on Ottawa.[83]

Very recently (Summer 1982) Souster spoke to me about what he perceives to be the betrayal of Canadian literary talent by Canadian universities.

> There should be more focus
> from the university on
> publishing young Canadian poets.
> They are lax at doing something
> practical at helping Canadian
> letters. They should be the
> leaders in this cultural area.
> What do they do instead. The U. of T.
> pays Robert Lowell $1500.00 for
> one afternoon.[84]

Souster's antipathy towards the academic community is now rooted deeply in his personality. The "university" or the "institution" for Souster is merely an extension of the "commercial", "corporate", and "political" forces which exploit the downtrodden and outcasts in society. As in the "Demolition" poems, Souster's refusal to take a balanced or objective viewpoint in dealing with the academic community precludes the possibility of a common meeting ground. This is surely the reason Souster does not give readings or grant interviews. This is a shame. Both sides in this controversy would benefit from an enlightened interaction.

To Souster's great credit, however, is the fact that he has spent his entire literary career attempting to foster the growth of Canadian letters. In co-founding and editing numerous poetry magazines such as Direction (1943), Enterprise (1948), Contact (1952), and Cerberus (1954), he has unselfishly given of his time and talent to help encourage and develop the work of young Canadian writers. This work provided no financial reward. That for so long the universities did next to nothing in an area so dear to Souster's heart has without doubt jaundiced his view of both their judgement and credibility.

Souster, like Williams, worked at his daily vocation so that he might have the luxury of writing what he chose. His forty-one years at the bank have given him freedom from

financial or political pressure and allowed him to pursue his craft. But even freedom has its price. There is less time to write and perhaps greater demands by the family of the man who possesses two vocations. The pace of one's life quickens and stress takes its toll. Writing must often be accomplished in spare moments. Williams wrote opening lines of poems on prescription pads between patients. Souster writes for an hour each morning and jots opening lines and word pictures down on the way to the bank. Serving at least two masters requires tremendous organization of one's time and life. Souster has few illusions about "the literary life". One wonders if he exaggerates the frustration of his vocation in "The Literary Life":

> The literary life
> and the smell of it,
>
> or the budding young author
> up assorted rectums.
>
> Better his mother
> should have lifted furniture.[85]

Despite Souster's ambivalent attitude to systems, institutions, and even the poetic craft itself, there remains a joy and pride in his creations which has lasted for well over forty years.

> Unwanted
> unread
> laughed at
> puked upon
>
> may yet assume majesty
> and rule the world.[86]

This is Souster's tribute to the poem, that art form which has given him a lifetime of pain and pleasure. In another recent poem entitled "The Struggle's Everything", the poet philosophically sums up the nature of his life and craft:

> The struggle's everything:
> delight in it
> grow in it,
> love it for its own sake:
> never let it slip you,
> keep your teeth in it always.
>
> When it's over,
> when they accept you
> when they honour you,
> remember they're also
> getting ready to file you
> in a small box somewhere
> with your name stencilled on it,
> like a very honoured
> dead Japanese warrior. . . .
>
> The struggle's everything:
> when it's over
> that's the end of you.[87]

And in his latest volume of poetry, significantly titled Hanging In, Souster describes his craft as a game to the end.

> You chasing a squirrel,
> me chasing after
> that heartless bitch poetry,
>
> Little cat
> we may be game,
> but we've each taken on
> a lot more than we can handle![88]

A cursory examination of Souster's poetry might leave a reader with a feeling of pessimism. A thorough reading of his work reveals, however, that Souster, like

Williams, is far closer to an existentialist viewpoint than to one of fatalism. Like Williams, he is always searching for those special moments which add significance to existence. When Souster finds these moments and remains unbiased as an observer, he produces his best poetry. Those moments may come in the form of epiphany as in "The Butterfly" or they may involve a tramp beating a snow-removal machine to a cigarette butt.

> It's a race to see which will reach
> the cigarette butt first,
> the hand reaching down into the gutter
> or the snow-removal machine
> gulping the slush for a long line of patient trucks.
>
> Well, the hand wins
> by a three-foot margin, and as the body
> straightens up, prize in its shaky clutch,
> there's the age-old, human smile
> of victory![89]

The spontaneous moments in the journey matter far more than the arrival or even the quest itself. Souster as much as proclaims this philosophy in "Merry Go Round". After a lifetime at his craft he can still ask the rhetorical question:

> Still grabbing
> at that golden ring?
>
> The ride's the thing.[90]

CONCLUSION

When asked to define poetry Raymond Souster answers, "What is poetry but a celebration of our time on earth; the years behind, the present, and the time ahead".[1] Souster's "time on earth" has been spent almost exclusively in Toronto. Poems such as "The Hated City" demonstrate not only Souster's ambivalent attitude towards his city, but also his recognition that "our time on earth" is one of trial and vicissitudes.

While Souster's ambivalence always has a personal note to it, Williams is more objective and therefore more successful in depicting both the brutality and the loveliness of Paterson.

> And silk spins from the hot drums to a music
> of pathetic souvenirs, a comb and nail-file
> in an imitation leather case -- to
> remind him, to remind him! and
> a photograph-holder with pictures of himself
> between the two children, all returned
> weeping, weeping -- in the back room
> of the widow who married again, a vile tongue
> but laborious ways, driving a drunken
> husband. . . .2

Williams contrasts this pathetic description of lives within the city with a poet's understanding that the people "wiping the nose on sleeves, come here / to dream".[3] Williams articulates what Souster understands but does not say;

> Things, things unmentionable
> the sink with the waste farina in it and
> lumps of rancid meat, milk-bottle tops: have
> here a still tranquility and liveliness. . . .[4]

Souster is quite correct when he describes Williams as his mentor. Williams was an innovator. Souster has followed the lead of Williams in areas of theme, language, simplicity of line, and to a certain extent subject matter. Souster, however, is not an innovator and has never attempted to claim that title. Paterson is concerned with, among other things, the poetic process. Williams's concern with the techniques of modern verse were evident as early as 1920 in his preface to Kora in Hell: Improvisations. For Williams, writing poetry was clearly an act as well as a process. Writing in a letter Williams asserted regarding Paterson, "If I did not achieve a new language I at least stated what I would not say".[5] Souster is also concerned with language and the nature of the poetic craft. But here again he follows Williams closely and does not innovate as Williams did in Paterson and the later poems in Pictures from Brueghel.

When Souster captures a spontaneous moment and records it while remaining detached from the action itself, he often succeeds in choosing a language which reveals his world and the vision he holds of it. Too often when he impinges on the moment with his bias or his anxiety, the language fails and becomes insincere or cliché. It does

not remain true to the moment or Souster's vision of the city.

Williams succeeds where Souster fails not merely because he is the superior craftsman. He captures the total rhythm of his environment in all its nuances by "personifying Paterson and by 'Patersonizing' himself".[6] As Robert Lowell points out;

> He (Williams) is in possession of all the materials that he can use. First the City is his: all its aspects, its past, its present, its natural features, its population, and its activities are available for him to interrelate and make dramatic. But also he can use his whole life in the City -- every detail is an experience, a memory, or a symbol. For Williams, a man is what he experiences. . . .[6]

Williams has gone far beyond Souster's mere intrusion into a moment taking place in the city. In Paterson, Williams has achieved complete identification with his subject. Williams is the city and the city is Williams. Add to this Williams's technical innovation and virtuosity and his ability to fit his observations to the right rhythms and a world is revealed through language.

Paterson, especially Book One, succeeds in creating a new language which reveals the internal and external world of its subject and author. Souster at his best captures a language which gives profound meaning to a spontaneous

moment within the life of the city and the poet. These moments or periods of achievement are balanced against times of disappointment, frustration, and the inability of language to communicate the subtleties of city life. Raymond Souster's "Invocation to the Muse" articulates the ambivalence all poets must feel concerning their craft. It is particularly appropriate to Williams and Souster as they interact with their respective cities:

> Goddess, I've watched
> too many of your subjects
> go almost mad
> with jealousies, disappointments,
> not to wonder at all this waste
> of time, effort, nerve-ends.
>
> Nevertheless, desiring nothing
> and expecting little, living only
> for your secret, inner praise,
> I give thanks
> that you, goddess, from so many
> should have chosen me
> for your cursed and singular blessing.[7]

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

[1] Interview with Raymond Souster, Summer 1981. The interviews with Souster were conducted over the past two years. The first two sessions were taped. After we began to feel more comfortable with one another, I simply took notes as we talked. The quotations used in the thesis are from the tape recordings and from numerous telephone conversations with Souster in which I attempted to clarify certain points.

Souster and my father worked together for close to forty years in the same department at the main branch of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. I have had the pleasure of knowing Raymond Souster for close to ten years and am proud to count this fine gentleman among my friends.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

[1]Leo Tolstoy, What is Art? (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. vi.

[2]W. C. Williams, Paterson, p. 235.

[3]John C. Thirlwall, ed., "William Carlos Williams' 'Paterson'", in New Directions 17 (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1961), p. 252.

[4]W. C. Williams, Selected Letters (New York: New Directions, 1957), Introduction.

[5]W. C. Williams, Paterson, p. 11.

[6]John C. Thirlwall, ed., "William Carlos Williams' 'Paterson'", p. 252.

[7]Ibid., p. 252.

[8]W. C. Williams, Pictures from Brueghel (New York: New Directions, 1962), p. 108.

[9]W. C. Williams, Kora in Hell: Improvisations (Boston: The Four Seas Company, 1920), Introduction.

[10]R. Coles, William Carlos Williams: The Knack of Survival in America (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1975), p. 68.

[11]W. H. Pritchard, Lives of the Modern Poets (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 269.

[12]Ibid., p. 287.

[13]Ibid., p. 288.

[14]R. Coles, William Carlos Williams: The Knack of Survival in America, p. 48.

[15]William Wordsworth, "Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads" (1800), in David Perkins, ed., English Romantic Writers (New York: Harcourt, Brace, World, 1967), p. 322.

[16]Ibid., p. 321.

[17]Ibid., p. 322.

[18]J. Canaroe, William Carlos Williams' Paterson: Landscape and Language (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), p. 24.

[19]John C. Thirlwall, ed., "William Carlos Williams' 'Paterson'", p. 254.

[20]W. C. Williams, Paterson, p. vi.

[21]John C. Thirlwall, ed., "William Carlos Williams' 'Paterson'", p. 254.

[22]Fragments of a planned sixth book were found on Williams's desk at the time of his death. This confirms a process as continuous as the Passaic River itself.

[23]W. C. Williams, Paterson, p. 239.

[24]Ibid., p. 212.

[25]Ibid., p. 97.

[26]Ibid., p. 3.

[27]Ibid., p. 204.

[28]Ibid., p. 207.

[29]W. C. Williams, I Wanted to Write a Poem, p. 72.

[30]W. C. Williams, Paterson, p. 6.

[31]Ibid., p. 8.

[32]R. Jarrell, Poetry and the Age (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 63.

[33]W. C. Williams, Paterson, Preface to Book One.

[34]Ibid., p. 6.

[35]Ibid., p. 7.

[36]Ibid., p. 15.

[37]Ibid., p. 17.

[38]Ibid., p. 18.

[39]Ibid., p. 11.

[40]Ibid., p. 24.

[41]Ibid., p. 12.

[42]Ibid., p. 20.

[43]Ibid., p. 50.

[44]Ibid., p. 106.

[45]J. Conarroe, William Carlos Williams' Paterson: Landscape and Language, p. 32.

[46]W. C. Williams, Paterson, p. 39.

[47]Ibid., p. 34.

[48]Ibid., p. 25.

[49]*Ibid.*, p. 43.

[50]Jerome Mazzaro, ed., *Profile of William Carlos Williams* (Ohio: Charles Merrill Company, 1971), p. 75.

[51]W. C. Williams, *Paterson*, p. 49.

[52]*Ibid.*, p. 57.

[53]I.e. to block the flow of the river in order to harness hydro-electric power.

[54]J. Mazzaro, ed., *Profile of William Carlos Williams*, p. 76.

[55]W. C. Williams, *I Wanted to Write a Poem*, p. 72.

[56]W. C. Williams, *Paterson*, p. 79.

[57]*Ibid.*, p. 81.

[58]J. A. Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets* I, 284.

[59]W. C. Williams, *Paterson*, p. 83.

[60]*Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

[61]*Ibid.*, p. 129.

[62]*Ibid.*, p. 102.

[63]*Ibid.*, p. 100.

[64]*Ibid.*, p. 140.

[65]*Ibid.*, p. 144.

[66]*Ibid.*, p. 145.

[67]*Ibid.*, p. 7.

[68] Ibid., p. 53.

[69] Ibid., p. 45.

[70] Ibid., p. 201.

[71] Ibid., p. 171.

[72] Ibid., p. 176.

[73] Ibid., p. 176.

[74] Ibid., p. 171.

[75] Ibid., p. 178.

[76] Ibid., p. 177.

[77] Ibid., p. 201.

[78] Ibid., p. 200.

[79] Ibid., p. 203.

[80] Ibid., p. 202.

[81] Ibid., p. 203.

[82] Ibid., p. 204.

[83] Ibid., p. 213.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., p. 207.

[86] Ibid., p. 226.

[87] Ibid., p. 213.

[88]Ibid., p. 212.

[89]Ibid., p. 234.

[90]Ibid., p. 212.

[91]Ibid., p. 226.

[92]Ibid., p. 228.

[93]Ibid.

[94]Ibid., p. 235.

[95]Ibid., p. 239.

[96]Ibid., p. 187.

[97]R. Jarrell, Poetry and the Age (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 62.

[98]W. C. Williams, Pictures from Brueghel, pp. 108-109.

[99]Ibid., p. 120. I will later argue that this poem and particularly these lines had a dramatic effect on the young Raymond Souster and his development as a poet.

[100]J. Conarroe, William Carlos William's Paterson: Landscape and Language, p. 26.

[101]W. C. Williams, Paterson, pp. 77-78.

[102]W. C. Williams, Pictures from Brueghel, p. 183.

[103]Ibid., p. 184.

[104]W. C. Williams, Paterson, p. 135.

[105]Ibid., p. 233.

[106] *Ibid.*

[107] *Ibid.*, p. 239.

[108] *Ibid.*

[109] W. C. Williams, *Collected Later Poems*, p. 24.

[110] W. C. Williams, *Collected Early Poems*, p. 343.

[111] W. C. Williams, *Paterson*, p. 176.

[112] Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981.

[113] W. C. Williams, *Selected Letters*, p. 20.

[114] J. Hillis Miller, *Poets of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1965), p. 312.

[115] W. C. Williams, *Paterson*, p. 223.

[116] W. C. Williams, *Selected Letters*, p. 332.

[117] W. C. Williams, *Pictures from Brueghel*, p. 117.

[118] W. C. Williams, *Paterson*, p. 33.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

[1]Raymond Souster, Change-Up: New Poems (Toronto: Oberon Press, 1974), [no pagination]. Robin Mathews is a professor of English at Carleton University. In 1968, at a meeting of the Council of Canadian Poets, he accused Souster of relying on the inspiration of American poets (particularly Williams and Robert Lowell). Mr. Mathews accused Souster of betraying his Canadian poetic roots. This explains the sarcasm which pervades the poem.

[2]L. Wagner, Interviews with William Carlos Williams (New York: New Directions, 1976), pp. xviii-xix.

[3]F. Davey, Louis Dudek and Raymond Souster (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1980), p. 14.

[4]These are the names Souster remembers vividly. There were other poets involved.

[5]F. Davey, Louis Dudek and Raymond Souster, p. 11.

[6]Note that the date on the letter is not the same as the date given in "The Letter on My Wall".

[7]Interviews with Raymond Souster, Summer 1981, Winter 1981.

[8]Interview with Raymond Souster, Summer 1981.

[9]W. C. Williams, Pictures from Brueghel, p. 108.

[10]Interview with Raymond Souster, Summer 1981.

[11]Interviews with Raymond Souster, Summer 1981, Winter 1981.

[12]R. Souster, "The Six Quart Basket", in The Colour of the Times (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1964), 60.

[13]Raymond Souster, "The Stone", in Collected Poems (Toronto: Oberon Press, 1982), III, 38.

[14]Raymond Souster, "Air Raid", in Collected Poems (Toronto: Oberon Press, 1980), I, 27.

[15]"June, 1945", ibid, 90.

[16]See the third paragraph of Williams letter to Souster.

[17]See footnote number three (Souster's letter to Dudek).

[18]Interview with Raymond Souster, Summer 1981.

[19]Now being published in five volumes by Oberon Press, Toronto.

[20]Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981.

[21]F. Davey, Louis Dudek and Raymond Souster, p. 52.

[22]See the section on Williams and auditory poetry in this thesis on page 46.

[23]Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981.

[24]W. C. Williams, I Wanted to Write a Poem, p. 75.

[25]Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981.

[26]Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981.

[27]W. C. Williams, Collected Later Poems, p. 85.

[28]W. C. Williams, Pictures from Brueghel, p. 108.

[29]Souster, Raymond, "Dig", in Collected Poems, I, 241.

[30]Interview with Raymond Souster, Summer 1981.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

[1]Raymond Souster, The Colour of the Times, p. 131.

[2]See such poems as: "A Deam of Hanlon's"; "Lagoons, Hanlon's Point" and "Hanlon's Point Amusement Park".

[3]Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981.

[4]The title of this book of poetry is taken from Williams' Paterson.

[5]Interview with Raymond Souster, Summer 1981.

[6]Interview with Raymond Souster, Summer 1981.

[7]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, II, 152.

[8]Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981.

[9]Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981.

[10]Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981.

[11]Raymond Souster, Selected Poems (Toronto: Oberon, 1972), no pagination.

[12]Ibid.

[13]G. Geddes, "Souster, Rooted and Faithful, in his Sufficient Toronto", Globe and Mail, 26 October 1974.

[14]Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981.

[15]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, II, 28.

[16]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, I, 55.

[17]A name which Souster has given to a series of poems dealing with demolition and destruction.

[18]Raymond Souster, "The Wrecking-Ball", in Collected Poems, III, 72.

[19]Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981.

[20]Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981.

[21]Raymond Souster, "The Wreckers", in Ten Elephants on Yonge Street, p. 136.

[22]"John Street", ibid, p. 141.

[23]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, III, 275.

[24]Ibid., p. 279.

[25]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, II, 120.

[26]Raymond Souster, A Local Pride (Toronto: Contact Press, 1962), pp. 30-31. The title of this volume of poetry is also taken from Williams' Paterson.

[27]Raymond Souster, "The Hated City", in Collected Poems, I, 86.

[28]Raymond Souster, "Old Windsor Hotel", in Collected Poems, III, 294.

[29]Raymond Souster, Selected Poems, Introduction.

[30]One is reminded of Auden's lines on Yeats in "In Memory of W. B. Yeats".

> You were silly like us; your gift survived it all;
> The parish of rich women, physical decay,
> Yourself; mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.
> Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still.
> For poetry makes nothing happen; it survives

In the valley of its saying where executives
Would never want to tamper; it flows south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.

[31]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, III, 244.

[32]Ibid., I, 308.

[33]Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981.

[34]Interviews with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981, Summer 1982.

[35]Interview with Raymond Souster, Summer 1982.

[36]As of July, 1982, this poem still awaits completion. Souster informs me that it may appear in Volume Five of the Collected Poems (Spring 1984).

[37]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, I, 187.

[38]Raymond Souster, The Colour of the Times, p. 83.

[39]Raymond Souster, "Sleep Toronto", in Collected Poems, I, 159.

[40]"The City Called a Queen", ibid., 239.

[41]F. Davey, Louis Dudek and Raymond Souster, p. 145.

[42]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, I, 145.

[43]Louis Dudek, "Groundhog Among the Stars: The Poetry of Raymond Souster", Canadian Literature, XXII (Autumn 1964), 35.

[44]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, III, 21.

[45]Interview with Raymond Souster, Summer 1981.

[46]Interview with Raymond Souster, Summer 1981.

[47]Raymond Souster, "After Dark", in Collected Poems, I, 75.

[48]"In Love", ibid., 95.

[49]"Apart", ibid., 97.

[50]"The Marriage Bit", ibid, III, 185.

[51]"The Mating Season", ibid., I, 315.

[52]Ibid., I, 322.

[53]Raymond Souster, Rain-Check (Toronto: Oberon Press, 1975), p. 85.

[54]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, I, 187.

[55]"Young Girls", ibid., 65.

[56]Raymond Souster, "Wedding Reception" in Walking Death (Toronto: Contact Press, 1955), 4.

[57]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, I, 99.

[58]Ibid.

[59]Ibid., II, 210.

[60]Raymond Souster, Selected Poems, Introduction.

[61]Ibid., p. 97.

[62]D. H. Lawrence, Selected Poems (New York: Viking Press, 1959), p. 95.

[63]W. C. Williams, Paterson, p. 212.

[64]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, I, 316.

[65]F. Davey, Louis Dudek and Raymond Souster, p. 130.

[66]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, III, 157.

[67]Raymond Souster, Change-Up: New Poems, no pagination.

[68]W. C. Williams, Paterson, p. 177.

[69]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, II, 226.

[70]William Wordsworth, Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads (1800), ed. David Perkins (New York: Harcourt, Brace, World, 1967), p. 323.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Ibid.

[73]Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1981.

[74]Raymond Souster, The Colour of the Times, p. 62.

[75]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, I, 108.

[76]Raymond Souster, "The Butterfly", in The Colour of the Times, 64.

[77]Interview with Raymond Souster, Autumn 1981.

[78]Interview with Raymond Souster, Autumn 1981.

[79]Raymond Souster, "Advice for a Critic", in Collected Poems, I, 187.

[80]Raymond Souster, "Introduction", in Ten Elephants on Yonge Street.

[81]Ibid.

[82]Raymond Souster, Extra Innings (Toronto: Oberon Press, 1977), 165.

[83]Raymond Souster, "To the Canadian Poets, 1940", in Collected Poems, I, 187.

[84]Interview with Raymond Souster, Summer 1982.

[85]Raymond Souster, "The Poem", in Rain-Check, 101.

[87]"The Struggle's Everything", ibid., 93.

[88]Raymond Souster, "Game to the End", in Hanging In, 35.

[89]Raymond Souster, "The Victory", in The Colour of the Times, 64.

[90]Raymond Souster, "Merry Go Round", in Collected Poems, III, 269.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

[1]Interview with Raymond Souster, Winter 1982.

[2]W. C. Williams, Paterson, p. 37.

[3]Ibid., p. 38.

[4]Ibid., p. 39.

[5]W. C. Williams, Selected Letters, p. 188.

[6]Jerome Mazzaro, ed., Profile of William Carlos Williams, p. 73.

[7]Raymond Souster, Collected Poems, II, 203.

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--------. Walking Death. Toronto: Contact Press, 1955.

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