“Rigor of beauty is the quest”(11)\(^1\) of *Paterson*. The following passage from his *Autobiography* is suggestive of Williams’ idea of how to discover the beautiful thing:

I was permitted by my medical badge to follow the poor, defeated body into those gulfs and grottos. And the astonishing thing is that at such places—foul as they may be with the stinking ischiorectal abscesses of our comings and goings—just there, the thing, in all its greatest beauty, may for a moment be freed to fly for a moment guiltily about the room. In illness, in the permission I as a physician have had to be present at deaths and births, at the tormented battles between daughter and diabolic mother, shattered by a gone brain—just there—for a split second—from one side or the other, it has fluttered before me for a moment, a phrase which I quickly write down on anything at hand. (288-9)\(^3\)

Williams goes down to gulfs and grottos. There he faces “the elementary world”\(^3\): filth, disease, death, stinking air, human beings
reduced to naked reality without any cover of civilization. Only there the beautiful thing reveals itself. The first step, then, toward the discovery is descent down to the base of the matter, to the elemental reality, to the ground which is the origin and end of life, which, itself formless, is the origin of every form. In order to attain this descent, the destruction of intermediary forms between self and the ground is necessary and unavoidable. Any clear-cut forms are obstacles to the quest of beauty, whether they are one's own fixed viewpoints or social, intellectual, and aesthetic traditions. Moreover, for Williams as well as for many other modern poets, the present moment is the only reality. Therefore the descent is an approach to the present moment. The state of nonidentity and non-form expressed in

The multiple seed,
packed tight with detail, soured,
is lost in the flux and the mind,
distracted, floats off in the same
scum (12)

is the fertile ground from which an identity is born and to which it returns. The first step toward the creation of a poem is to descend to this state of formless flux. “Never in this / world will a man live well in his body / save dying... yet that is / the design. Renews himself / thereby” (12-13). Only by dying can one renew himself. Only by returning to the formless ground can one attain rebirth. This pattern of birth-death-rebirth is the basic structural principle in *Paterson.*
Until Part 3, Book II the movement toward descent is not conspicuous, though there are instances of descent in the plunge-into-the-water episodes of Sam Patch and Mrs. Cumming, in the descriptions of bloody violent incidents and of daring acts at the risk of life, in the plunge to the bottom of a river or a muddy lake in search of pearls or eels. The main emphasis in Books I and II (Parts 1 and 2) is, as Williams says in his Note to *Paterson*, on the presentation of the elemental character of Paterson and its modern replicas (3). It is in Part 3, Book II that the movement toward descent becomes conspicuous. It begins with the beckoning to descent: "Look for the nul / defeats it all / the N of all / equations," "for that nul / that's past all / seeing / the death of all / that's past / all being" (95). Then the affirmation of rebirth after destruction: "but Spring shall come and flowers will bloom" (95). The passage which follows, beginning with "The descent beckons / as the ascent beckoned" (96), has a well-balanced structure; the balance resulting from the secure conviction of the poet in the pattern that after descent comes ascent. The descent beckons, as the ascent beckoned. The ascent beckoned in the past, and the result is all the forms which exist now. Now descent beckons, the descent which brings everything "that's past" and "all being" to nul. "The ground has undergone / a subtle transformation, its identity altered" (29). A new poetry fitting this change needs to be invented. In order to invent it the poet must first descend to the nul of being.

Book III carries out this descent in the forms of wind, fire and flood in Parts 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The little lyric at the
beginning of Part 1 serves as a presentation of the subject matter of Book III: the cost of loving the beautiful thing (the locust tree). This cost is the descent necessary and unavoidable for the quest of the beautiful thing. There is a strange connection between the human and aesthetic love of the beautiful and materialistic utilitarianism in

How much does it cost

to love the locust tree

in bloom?

A fortune bigger than

Avery could muster

So much

So much. (117)

Materialism and money-complex are attributes of the modern world where love and language fails. Book III is entitled “The Library”. Because anywhere is everywhere for Williams, the locus of Book III, as well as of Books I and II, is this library-world predominated by materialism. Book III begins with the movement from the streets into the library and ends with that from the library back into the streets. Everything in Book III happens in the library-world and the mind of the poet simultaneously, for self is the world in Williams. It is “interpenetration, both ways” (12).

PART 1 begins with a movement from the streets into the library:

A cool of books

will sometimes lead the mind to libraries
of a hot afternoon. (118)

Heat is a positive quality in *Paterson*. In his *Autobiography* Williams says,

the more heat, the more physiologic oxygen we drive to our brains the better the work of art we shall or are likely to perform.⁴

It is only with heat, destructive or creative, that the achievement of the beautiful thing is possible. If heat signifies the presence of energy, the “cool” of books denotes lack of energy, which is negative. Outside the library there is a strong wind blowing. The wind is against the movement into the library away from the streets. The door of the library is held by the wind, and wrenched from the arms and hands (120). From the streets of wind and heat the mind seeks a refuge in the cool, silent library, where there is only an indirect contact with life. A wind is blowing in the library, too, but it is only a “ghost of a wind” (118) which the mind mistakes for the actual wind.

Drawn from the streets we break off
our minds’ seclusion and are taken up by
the books’ winds. (118)

The traditional romantic poetry Williams is against is based upon the distinction between self and the world. Self, in order to keep its integrity, remains apart from the world. The sublime Pleasure
Dome, the world of Nature myth, and Yeatsian Tower, are products of the mind’s seclusion from the streets, the actual life containing irrationality, filth, suffering and madness. But in Williams the mind can be itself only when it is in the street; for without the world it is nothing, as without the mind the world is nothing (148). The books “lead the mind away” (118) from itself, from the streets of hot afternoon.

Through the books’ winds and illusory scent of locust blossoms comes the voice of the river:

below the cataract
soon to be dry
the river whirls and eddys

first recollected. (118)

What is first recollected is the water of the river: after the dispersal at the fall it is recollected into a river again. But it is also the mind. The mechanism established in the reader’s mind by the repetition of the phrase “to lead the mind away” three times, makes him expect another appearance of the same phrase in the place where “first recollected” is placed. To connect this phrase with “the mind” which has been led away is a natural impulse. This interpretation is further supported by the passage directly following it: “something / has brought him back to his own / mind” (119). The sudden appearance of the pronoun “him” is characteristic of Williams. It is Giant Faitoute, Paterson the man and the city, and the mind. The movement of the mind back to itself is that from the library back to the streets. In the mind,
a falls unseen

and refalls—and does not cease, falling
and refalling with a roar. (119)

The falls is an image of ever-renewed descent, of energetic and
daring approach to the naked reality. "Its terrifying plunge" invites
"marriage" (100). In Book II Faitoute flyes "pursued by the roar"
of the falls, lacking the courage to plunge fearlessly to the base in
order to attain "the sun kissed summits of love" (104). Here in
Book III Faitoute is in the library in order to find a "rest" "against/
the uproar of water falling" (119), for "the Library / is sanctuary
to our fears" (120). The voice beckoning descent reminds Faitoute
of the beautiful thing, of "all who are windblown, / touched by
the fire" (119). The beautiful thing, the wind, the fire, the falls,
is a principle contrary to the "staleness" (123) of the library. The
mind sways between the falls and the books, and for the present
the falls is too weak to draw the mind completely away from the
books. The water falls and refalls,

unwilling to lie in its bed

and sleep and sleep, sleep

in its dark bed. (119)

The contextual meaning is that the falls is unwilling to sleep. But
the repetition of "sleep" (a negative word in Paterson) creates an
effect opposite to what the syntax tells. And "sleep and sleep,
sleep" makes up an independent line from "unwilling to lie in its
bed,” and it functions independently from its connection with the
word “unwilling.” The result is the emphasis on the inability and
weakness of the voice beckoning descent. On Page 120 the movement
from the streets into the library is repeated. As the mind enters
the library, laughter fades. Laughter is associated with fire, the
burst of energy, in Part 2 (142), and the library is characterized
as predominated by “SILENCE” (124), which also denotes the state
of incommunication.

Now Faitoute is inside the library, searching for the beautiful
thing. The articles in old newspapers about descent (violence,
energetic daring actions, wonders) refresh his mind, but at the
same time terrify him. His mind “starts back” “from the reading”
(120)—the same flinching as from the wind, heat and the falls we
have seen above.

Night falls. “A roar of books / from the wadded library op-
presses” Faitoute, “until / his mind begins to drift” (123) to the
beautiful thing. The image of frustration and confinement abounds
on Page 123. “Dead men’s dreams, confined by these walls, risen, /
seek an outlet,” but “unable, unable” to get out of them. The
result of this frustration is the enfeebling of the mind: “The
spirit languishes” (123). Then comes the image of birds, that are
the common image of natural impulse for freedom and aspiration:

    they sought safety (in books)
    but ended battering against glass
    at the high windows. (123)

“They” are the birds, the mind, and Faitoute himself. This is a
fit summary for what has happened since the beginning of Part 1: the mind has sought safety (from fears) in books, but has ended up being frustrated and enfeebled. Faitoute is trying hard to “translate” the past in terms of the present “quickly / step by step or be destroyed” (124). The dead men’s dreams must be let out of the confinement of books into the living present. Otherwise the stagnation and oppression of the library will destroy him and make him “a castrate” (lack of creativity, of energy, of life). “A slowly descending veil” is “closing about the mind,” and he is in a critical condition:

Awake, he dozes in a fever heat,
cheeks burning . . . loaning blood
to the past, amazed . . . risking life. (124)

He is “awake,” and the “heat” and the burning cheeks suggest the exercise of his imagination. But this heat is also a “fever heat.” He is risking his life: “The sea! / How near it was to them! / Soon! / Too soon” (124). “Them” is the birds, the mind, the library-world. The sea is, as is made clear in Book IV, the end and beginning of life, death and formless flux before birth. Faitoute’s creative imagination, though threatening to become “impotent,” “will not” (125) die. It gains force in Part 2 and burns down the hostile environment. It is in Part 3 that this imagination-heat is utterly extinguished by the leaden flood.

The mind seeking the rigor of beauty makes several attempts in the direction of descent. Faitoute reads articles about extreme savagery done by whites to the Indians and about tight-roper
7). He also goes to a girl who has a "lost body" (129). She seems to be a prostitute or a gang-mistress, and is "drunk and bedraggled" (127).

Reck of it!
What does it matter?
could set free
only the one thing— (127)

The one thing is the radiant gist. To discover it Faitoute is willing to "embrace the / foulness" (126). Indeed, only in the foulness does the gist hover free to be released out. The girl is drunk and foul "to release / the strictness of beauty" (127). Faitoute's impatient urge to strip her is an urge for descent. Only when the girl is disrobed the descent to the elemental reality, sexual plunge, and discovery of the beautiful thing and child-birth is possible. It is a desperate urge, coming from a man who is near death in the lifelessness of the library. But it is frustrated. One possible reason for the failure might be his wrong attitude toward the girl. While the right attitude is to "embrace the foulness," he rejects the reek of the girl: "You smell as though you need / a bath. Take off your clothes and purify / yourself" (128). Only a loving approach to the girl succeeds in disrobing her. Love embraces the foulness. It "stares death in the eye" (130). It descends to death unflinchingly and does not end there. It begets marriage, a "deathless song" which bears us "past" descent (131).

The library-world is indifferent (129) to beauty and marriage. It fears beauty "more than death" (129), for the love of beauty
involves a tremendous cost. Moreover, it fears that ascent might not come out of descent, and tries to dissuade the poet from trying to write a poem: “Give it up. Quit it. Stop writing. / ... you will never / separate that stain of sense” “from the inert mass. Never. / Never that radiance / quartered apart” (131-2). The voice is “an offense / to love, the mind’s worm eating / out the core” (132).

The world is the poet himself. It is his mind’s worm that is pulling his legs. But he knows that “death lies in wait,” death which is the words “that never get said” (133), and he will be eternally dead if he does not create a poem: “the radiant gist that / resists the final crystallization” (133). The release of radium from uranium taken from pitchblend is a fit parallel to Williams’ idea of poetic creation, and is developed in Book IV as one of the central images in that section. Madame Curie obtained radium by utilizing the radioactivity of uranium. Radioactivity is the disintegration of an atomic nucleus into parts, resulting in the release of enormous quantities of energy and rays. Atoms of uranium disintegrate into atoms of some other elements, and this process continues until the atoms crystallize into lead. The disintegration is both destructive and creative. It is destructive in that it smashes units of being into particles, creative in that it reveals the radiant gist. The poet, too, begins with pitchblend. He also creates his radiant gist by first destroying the existing forms into particles. Note the shift of emphasis in the poet’s imagination: right after he thinks about the radiant gist, he turns to the pitchblend from which the gist is obtained: “in the pitch-blend / the radiant gist” (133).

“Thus it began” (133). The poet begins his search by turning
to descent. It is a re-beginning. He begins again and again, and
turns to descent over and over again. “Try another book. Break
through / the dry air of the place” (134). But this is ineffective.
He then thinks of making brothels his home, of sinking to an
elemental life, there to relax and cast away every moral, intel-
lectual, and aesthetic restrictions tradition has imposed upon him:

Toulouse Lautrec witnessed
it: limbs relaxed
—all religions
    have excluded it—
at ease, the tendons
untensed . (134)

This is a bodily change into an inert mass. It is a destruction of
forms necessary for the rebirth of a new form, just as a stone can
serve for building roads only when it is broken to pieces. The
way to achieve descent is to “quit this place” (the library) and
“go where all / mouths are rinsed: to the river for / an answer /
for relief from ‘meaning’” (135). The Library is a thing of the
past. The thing to do is to go to the river where the remnant of
the past is cleansed out of the mouth. It is to quit traditional
poetry stuffed with meaning, and destroy all the forms and rules
which stand between the poet and the inert mass with which he
is supposed to begin. Traditional poetry uses words primarily as
symbols which stand for something else called ‘meaning’. Against
this Williams holds up the theory of words as things, of a poem
as an object.
"A tornado approaches" (135), and it rips, twists the roofs of Paterson. It shakes the church on its foundations. In Book II the Protestant evangelist is preaching against the existing systems of values. The Protestant insists on the direct communion of an individual with God, attacking the Catholic Church which claims to be an intermediary between them. It also opposes the formalism of the Catholic Church as lacking spirit. If the church in the text is to be taken for a Catholic church, then the Protestant wind is against the library which is a block between self and the reality, and which is a hollow skeleton containing no life. If this interpretation is too far-fetched, it is at least evident that Williams holds church as a block between man and his dream of the beautiful thing. He shows his dislike of the church in a comment on *Kora in Hell* in his *Autobiography*: "everything I wanted to see live and thrive was being deliberately murdered in the name of church and state."

The tornado approaches, and the wind shakes the church. But the tornado has not come yet, nor is the church blown down. Part 1 ends with a preparation to dive:

and the poor cotton-spinner, over the roofs, preparing to dive

. looks down. (136)

The cotton-spinner is Sam Patch in Book I, and is at the same time Faitoute-Williams the poet. He is still in the library "searching among books" (136), but his mind is "elsewhere / looking down" at the bottom of the falls, preparing to make a descent.
PART 2 begins with a re-introduction of the theme of the cost. It begins with a discursive statement of the problem of poetic creation which necessarily involves destruction, and sets forward the basic equation of "to write is a fire" (137). Fire is primarily destructive: "Fire burns; that is the first law." It is fanned by wind which is an agent of destruction through which one achieves descent. To write is a fire, a destructive activity. A poet becomes a "destroying fire" (137). If he is to make the kind of poetry Williams wants, he must set words free from the necessities of the past. "Past objects have about them past necessities." The past necessities of syntax and meaning are to be annihilated before inventing a new form. And the result of this destruction is a formless mass of mutually-independent words and punctuations free from the associations traditionally attached to them. Moreover, "unless there is / a new mind there cannot be a new / line" (65). The whole attitude of the poet toward life, his idea of the relationship between self and the world, of logic, beauty, perfection, tradition—all of this should undergo a change in order to create a new poem. Therefore, "to write, nine tenths of the problem / is to live" (138), and also "the writing is nothing, the being / in a position to write" "is nine tenths / of the difficulty" (137). In order to have a new mind the poet must first get free from any forms, dialectics, systems and habits which have been formed hitherto. And this involves the danger of self-annihilation. Keats in his letter talks about having felt the threat of self-annihilation while he was sticking to his theory of negative capability. Therefore, this destructive fire must be scotched somewhere before it anni-
hilates self totally. Then writing is a release from "the conditions / which as we advance become—a fire, / a destroying fire" (137).

The locus of Part 2 is still the library. Suffocating smoke fills the prose passage describing the Smoke Ritual (138-9). The smoke is caused by suppressing fire. The "acrid fumes" is equated with "the books" (139) of the library which threatens to smother down the imaginative fire. But the fire bursts out: "One of the cars took fire in the night" (139). In Part 1 night falls (122), but here the night is "made day by the flames" (141):

Breathless and in haste
the various night (of books) awakes! awakes
and begins (a second time) its song, pending the
obloquy of dawn . (140)

'Waking' is a positive state in Paterson. The "bud forever green" in Part 2, Book I is equated with "eternal sleep" "challenging / our waking" (28). The bud is an "un-fledged desire," cold and unready, and is an image of divorce against which Paterson is written. In Part 1, Book III, Faitoute who is trying to translate the past in terms of the present is described as "awake"; yet he "dozes in a fever heat" and is in danger of joining the silence and deadly sleep of the books. The fire, then, is a force which challenges sleep and death, and creates a poem. Fire is to write: it is the action of writing which is at once creative and destructive. It is also the beautiful thing, the poem itself, which is the product of destructive creation. This double quality of fire is to be born in mind in reading Part 2.
The fire is still a "small blaze" (140) so that it does not have the power of wakening the whole library-world from sleep. But "at dawn a wind" comes "up and the flames" get "suddenly out of control." "Before noon the whole city" is "doomed" (140). Faitoute-Williams the poet finds an example of the beautiful thing in the towering flame. And the concreteness with which he describes the beauty of fire is characteristic of his creed of "no ideas but in things":

like a mouse, like
a red slipper, like
a star, a geranium,
a cat's tongue or—
thought, thought
that is a leaf, a
pebble, an old man
out of a story by

Pushkin . (141)

"Rotton" beams tumble and an "old" bottle is mauled. The fire burns everything there is, and what burns does not have to be old and rotten. But the point is that every form is a product of the past whose "reign over the living" has "ended" (140), and that those adjectives emphasize the fact that the fire is burning down "all that's past." Fire is an object of wonder: "All fire afire!" (142), a beautiful thing. The outburst of laughter in "a drunkenness / of flames" (142) adds to the Bacchic exuberance of energetic fire in contrast to the silence and inactivity of the library-world. Together with Blake, Williams thinks that "exuberance is beauty."
After this exalted outburst of wonder at the fire comes the important passage about an old bottle mauled in the fire:

An old bottle, mauled by the fire
gets a new glaze, the glass warped
to a new distinction, reclaiming the undefined.

Then nine lines later,

The glass
splotched with concentric rainbows
of cold fire that the fire has bequeathed
there as it cools, its flame
defied—the flame that wrapped the glass
deflowered, reflowered there by
the flame: a second flame, surpassing
heat . (142-3)

What Williams is doing here is to talk about poetic creation in terms of concrete things ("no ideas but in things"). An old bottle is mauled by fire and is reduced to "fire-blasted sand / that was glass, that was a bottle" (142). It is "unbottled," is deprived of its shape of a bottle, and is reduced to its original shapeless mass of material. But this annihilation is accompanied by amelioration. The fire, in destroying the bottle into shapelessness, has "bequeathed" it with "concentric rainbows / of cold fire." This "second flame, surpassing / heat" is a poem. The word "bequeath" denotes an act of conscious giving. The new beauty in the mauled glass is
an artifice, and is not something which is naturally born out of the mass by itself. In his *Autobiography* Williams says, however, that the beautiful thing is to be “discovered” in the inert mass, that a rarest element exists “not in our imaginations but there, there in fact,” that the process of discovering this beautiful thing is like that of recovering “metal out of ore.” On the first reading, the use of the word “bequeath” in the passage in question seems to contradict Williams’ idea of “discovery.” But it does not. The radiant rainbow exists in the mauled bottle as a potentiality as radium is hidden in pitchblend as a potentiality. When the glass had the rigid shape of a bottle it was impossible to reveal this beauty. But now it is possible since the bottle has returned to its original state of formlessness. In order to release this radiant gist out of pitchblend and grasp it as a beautiful form, invention is necessary. Invention is not an act of imposing a form generated out of the poet’s mind onto the loam which exists external to him. In Williams self and the world are identical. Forms come out of the loam itself. Invention arranges the formless mass in such a way that, retaining the formlessness of the mass, it still reveals the beautiful thing. Williams equates invention with discovery (103). This ambiguity of discovery-invention is reflected in the use of “flowering” imagery in the passage in question. The new beauty is the result of the reflowering of the glass by the flame. The acquisition of new beauty is at once a spontaneous organic self-realization on the part of the mauled bottle, and the result of the activity of the flame. The glass retains the unbottled, undefined state, yet it is metamorphosed into a second flame. This is
the kind of poetry Williams is after. The first step toward making
this poem is the unbottling process, the descent which annihilates
forms. But such disintegration is “a chastity of annihilation” (142).

Williams tells in his Note to Paterson that Book III seeks a
language of poetry. Fire is the language, the beautiful thing. But
it is not beautiful in the traditional sense. It is “vulgarity of
beauty” surpassing “all perfections” (145). This is the crux of
Williams’ idea of the beautiful thing. Aristotelian perfection with
a rigid form of beginning, middle and end, controlled by logic, and
basically static, is the result of imposing premeditated forms on
life and language. The question is how one can achieve a form
(for Williams says poetry is a form) which does not impose order
on language and life. The only answer is “write carelessly so that
nothing that is not green will survive” (155). It is to write sponta-
neously and instantaneously, with the result of non-logic and non-
perfection. “Greenness” is associated with newness, immaturity, the
state of a bud which has not grown into a full bloom. A pre-
meditated plan of composition is destructive to achieving the vulgarity
of beauty. Words are put on the paper instant by instant, and
form is created as the poem proceeds. In Autobiography Williams
quotes from Charles Olson’s theory of “Projective Verse” as a
mouthpiece for his own idea:

From the moment a poet ventures into FIELD COMPOSITION
—he can go by no track other than the one the poem under
hand declares for itself. Thus he has to behave, and be, instant
by instant, aware of some several forces just now beginning to
be examined.
Fire is the language of poetry. The movement of fire is the movement of Williams’ poetry. Fire is a dynamic energy which “attacks, stirs, animates,” and spreads deriving energy for spreading from the energy generated at this moment. Flames are created instant by instant, each flame becoming a “high energy-construct” discharging energy. There is no pre-decided direction for the fire, and it makes unexpected leaps. “There is no direction. Whither? / I cannot say” (28), Williams says. Furthermore, the burning of fire is a re-beginning action. It attacks, burns, then resumes the same process again and again. This is the way Paterson develops itself. The world of Paterson is a re-beginning world. Look at the Preface. Each of the second to sixth stanzas begins with an image of birth or beginning. The poet makes continuous plunges, and after them begins again. “Again is the magic word” (162).

The language of Williams’ poetry is an attack on the tradition, “a defiance of authority” (144). It destroys what has existed as norms and rules. It is this destructive aspect of fire that people fear, “squirting little hoses of / objection” (145) to smother it, as they fear the falls, the image of ever-renewing descent. Fire is equated with the falls:

the waterfall of the
flames, a cataract reversed, shooting
upward. (146)

The upward and downward movements are the same, ascent is descent. The very nature of fire is that it creates a beautiful thing, a flame, at the moment it destroys. The writing of a poem
is simultaneously creation and destruction.

Now that Faitoute-Williams the poet has realized the model for his poem, he tries to make "of it a replica" (172). He thinks about the daring boy "who drove a bull-dozer through / the barrage at Iwo Jima" (145), his action "gracing a flame" (145). But he is "lost, lost,"

because there is no way to link

the syllables anew to imprison him. (146)

Namely "invention is lacking, / the words are lacking" (146). Invention is a linking of the syllables anew to imprison a beautiful thing. The poet is "submerged / in wonder" (147) at the beauty of fire, and becomes identified with it. "The fire become the person" (147). Wonder is the response which man makes in facing the beautiful thing. And at the moment of wonder the man and the beautiful thing (the poem), and the poet attain that "fraternal embrace" of which Williams talks in Spring and All.¹²

The library burns down leaving the dead books, whose "emptiness of / a cavern" (149) has become clear beyond doubt. In contrast to the dead books a letter by somebody named "DJB" is introduced as another example of the vulgarity of beauty. With its talk about sex and child-birth, the letter resumes the sex- and marriage-motif dropped at the end of Part 1, and leads to the following scene where Faitoute goes to a prostitute. The scene repeats the descent, the discovery of the beautiful thing, and the marriage between self and the beautiful thing, which have been realized in the fire episode. This visit to a girl (150–4) forms a
parallel and a contrast to the disrobing episode in Part 1 (127–9). While the latter began with a wish to set free the beautiful thing ("Reek of it! / What does it matter? / could set free / only the one thing—," 127), the former begins with a voice of gratified wish:

Later

Beautiful thing

I saw you. (150)

While in Part 1 the wish is frustrated, in Part 2 it is gratified. The girl in Part 2 seems to be the same girl as the girl "from the backwoods / a touch of the savage / . and of T. B. / (a scar on the thigh)" (134) and also as the girl whom Faitoute visits in Part 1. This identification is significant in that it makes it clear that the girl is a prostitute and the place she is resting in is a brothel. Going to a brothel is regarded as a mode of descent (134). Faitoute goes to a brothel and literally goes down to "the basement" (150). And there, by the laundry tubs (as near to excrement as bathrooms) the girl is lying ill and alone. His eye is "level of the ground" (151). He has made a descent to face the elemental reality of disease, filth and stench ("the furnace odor," 151). It is an act of love inviting marriage.

Persephone

gone to hell, that hell could not keep with
the advancing season of pity. (151)

As spring came after Persephone's descent to hell, so after the loving descent comes the discovery and the establishment of affec-
tionate relationship between the male and female, who were divorced in Book I (35). Faitoute says, "the girl

looked at me, smiling, and we remained
thus looking, each at the other . in silence . You lethargic, waiting upon me, waiting for
the fire and I
attendant upon you, shaken by your beauty." (151)

Fire is both descent and ascent: it is both the approach to the girl and the final union (marriage). The girl is waiting for the fire of love. Whether it is a physical or spiritual love is irrelevant to question. In Williams the romantic division of spirit and body does not exist. The girl shows Faitoute her "legs, scarred (as a child) / by the whip" (152). It is the rigor of beauty which strikes him with its intensity of life. His response is wonder, and he is "shaken" by her beauty. Shaking, trembling, swaying is in Paterson a proof of intense life which is only possible when things are rooted in the ground. A juniper cone "trembles frantically" on the river-bank, standing "rooted there" (30). A "mottled branch" of the tree at the fall's edge sways slightly, "in itself the tempest" (31–32). This experience with the rigor of beauty is what protects us from stale death and all that scants our lives:

the green bush sways: is whence
I draw my breath, swaying, all of a piece,
separate, livens briefly, for the moment
unafraid . . (33)
Faitoute-Paterson-Williams begins a beautiful lyric preparing for the climax at the end of Part 2: "the night of a mine / Dear heart / It's all for you, my dove, my / changeling / But you! / —in your white lace dress" (152). This lyricism is carried to "the dying swan" (153), a phrase approaching hackneyed sentimentalism. But this movement is interrupted by the insertion of violent and vulgarly sexual episodes of "the guys from Paterson" beating up "the guys from Newark," of women receiving "a busted nose," of a whoopee party where they "maled / and femaled you jealously" (153). This insertion might be the result of Williams' fear of sentimentalism. He might have been afraid of the possibility that the section where Faitoute admires and melts into the beautiful girl might turn out to be sentimental. And he might have wanted to reassure the reader that the beauty of the girl is the vulgarity of beauty, not the traditional passive beauty of "the dying swan." The quotation marks for the phrase suggest that Williams is using this phrase perhaps ironically as a parody of the traditional concept of beauty.

Toward the very end of Part 2, Faitoute's love for the girl and his wonder at her beauty waxes stronger and stronger, and finally reaches its climax:

I can't be half gentle enough,
Half tender enough
    toward you, toward you,
inarticulate, not half loving enough
BRIGHTen
    the cor
where you are!
— a flame,
black plush, a dark flame.

(154)

His love, “the sledge that smashes the atom” (208), smashes the words and sentences into particles, and each particle becomes a high energy-discharge. A luminosity is emitted in this fission. Note the pictorial effectiveness of the passage: the white space brightening. Faitoute has been submerged in wonder, and attains that interpenetration with the thing of wonder. This marriage of self and the thing creates fire, “a dark flame.” Moreover, as the old bottle being mauled into shapeless glass by the fire gained thereby a new glaze and became a second flame, so here Williams has mauled the traditional norms of syntax and word-unit to create (and discover) a new flame, a poem.

When the girl shows Faitoute her scarred legs, he tells himself to

Read. Bring the mind back (attendant upon the page) to the day’s heat. The page also is the same beauty: a dry beauty of the page—beaten by whips. (152)

Instead of reading the page of dusty books he reads the page of naked reality, the beauty of beaten legs. The movement from the library into the streets is that of descent, and this is repeated twice in Part 2. This descent is carried out again in Part 3 in the form of flood.
The beginning of PART 3 again makes clear the locus of the section. It presents a macabre picture of the library-world rotting under water (155). The "boney fish" are people in this world whose characteristic is the indifference to the beautiful thing (129). The "calcined husks" of worms which "cut our fingers" are the cold, hard, lifeless forms and conventions antagonistic to happiness. "A taste of iodine / stagnates upon the law of percent- / ages."

In the tepee-library-world of Part 2 smoke was the agent to smother fire; here it is water that extinguishes fire—there is "a sour stench of embers" (156). The library-world which has "a smell of its own / of stagnation and death" (123) rots and rots under water, until it achieves self-annihilation. The descent accomplished in Part 3 is a natural death carried out by time and nature. But "no defeat is made up entirely of defeat" (96), and "the descent / made up of despairs / and without accomplishment / realizes a new awakening: / which is a reversal / of despair" (97). This desperate rotting of the world, against which the poet strives with his fire, is not a mere defeat. It is both constructive and destructive; or rather, constructive because it is destructive. By annihilating itself, it also destroys the forms and norms which prevent man from discovering the beautiful thing. By annihilating itself it prepares a way for rebirth.

We walk into a dream, from certainty to the unascertained, in time to see . . from the roseate past . . . a ribbed tail deploying. (155)

This passage shows the movement of Part 3, which has also been
that of Parts 1 and 2: a movement from certainty to the unascertained. The world of certainty is a world governed by “the law of percentages” and patterned by “calcined husks.” The world of the “unascertained” is that of “the undefined” (143), of mauled bottles deprived of clear-cut shape. In other words, the movement is from form to non-form, a movement of descent. As all forms are products of the past, the movement is also away from the “roseate past” to the present moment.

Rain falls, and the “muddy flux” gathers its force. It is a “muddy” flux which swallows things up and deprives them of their free movement. Lilies “that floated / quiet in the shallows, anchored, tug as / fish at a line” (156). Stagnation, confinement and oppression are characteristics of the library-world. And there rises in the mind a leaden flood of academism. The world is the mind. As the flood rises in the world, its counterpart rises in mind, and the two floods are really one and the same flood. The stream “grows leaden” within the mind. As the lilies are anchored in the muddy flux, the mind is anchored in a chair of academism:

Texts mount and complicate themselves, lead to further texts and those to synopses, digests and emendations. (156)

The word “anchor” suggests certainty, fixity and safety, which are contrary principles to fire. It is the certainty and fixity of dead forms, and the safety which the library offers to those who fear the beautiful thing and its cost. The poet welcomes this increasing stagnation of the library-world; for he hopes that, when the stag-
nation reaches its peak and the pressure of the stifling air rises, and when the library rots itself down, then "the words" might "break loose" and man might be able to breathe.

So be it.

Until the words break loose or—sadly hold, unshaken. Unshaken! So be it. For the made-arch holds, the water piles up debris against it but it is unshaken. (156)

The made-arch is a bridge, the verbal made-arch of syntax complicated by academism, or any other structure already existent. When it is shaken and crumbles down, it is when the disintegration process completes itself (164).

Three dogs appear on the following pages (157-159). One is the dog which is sinking in the flood. The other is the dog of an Indian chief Pogatticut, which was killed at his master's funeral. The third is that which was killed because he had bitten a man. The first dog, with his sinking dead to the bottom of "the sewer" (159) and then floating back to the water surface, offers the pattern of descent-ascent. The second dog is killed for the sake of rebirth and reunion after death, thus representing the descent-motif of destruction for the sake of recreation. The third dog was killed because of a law, a social made-arch, that requires dogs to be killed if they bite people three times. He is killed in spite of the affection and regret of the owner and the man whom he had bitten (157).

In this world where made-arches frustrate love, "there is no
case. / We close our eyes...: Ask no whys? / None wants our ayes” (162). But the poet cannot shut his eyes and remain passive; he tries to do something against the rising flood: “But somehow a man must lift himself again—” (162). The way to lift oneself up is to write a poem speedily: “speed against the inundation” (162).

Poet, poet! sing your song, quickly! or not insects but pulpy weeds will blot out your kind. (102)

But he fails. Frustration at his failure increases: “he feels he ought to do more,” and “feels so frustrated” (162). He sees “things” (163) but cannot do.

The water is now “undermining the railroad embankment” (163) and the whole city is submerged in the flood. The descent movement concludes: things fall apart, and chaos follows. Page 164 is an incoherent collection of pieces of actual speech, advertisement, calendar, etc., taken from the actual city life. The effect of the page is mainly pictorial. What is noticeable on this page is that in the formless confusion of FULL STOP (167), the sense of time (dates and the “minute-glass”) and creative elements (“January sunshine,” “eggs,” “plants,” “wedding bouquets”) exist. This page is followed by a letter from Ezra Pound at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital, urging Williams to read his favorite books. Williams regards Pound as an expatriate who “ran / and could run off / toward the peripheries— / to other centers” (48), while what he should have done is to stick to his own country and produce genuine American poetry. Williams is doubtful about Pound’s academic poetry, and the
books Pound recommends are all from the past and least interest Williams. Pound's letter seems as incongruous and even as ridiculous as is the phrase "the dying swan" (153), placed amidst the energetic descent movement and stunningly anti-traditional pages.

The descent movement is condensed into one page (166) of a "tabular account of specimens" found in the process of digging the Artesian Well in Paterson. When they dug the well to the depth of 2,100 feet, "the attempt to bore through the red sandstone was abandoned" (166), and the digging came to a full stop. Again on Page 167 is repeated the completion of descent:

—from the teeth, to the very eyes
. uh, uh
FULL STOP
—and leave the world
to darkness
and to
me

"Uh, uh" is a language of gesture, the most elemental language prior to the formation of logical sequence and verbal conventions. The misplaced period before "uh, uh" shows the breakdown of verbal made-arch. "When the water has receded" "things have lost their/form," and "mud / covers them" (167). The mud is and is not fertile—"fertile(?)mud" (167). People plunged into a muddy lake and found eels (46-47), but this time no eels are found but "rather a sort of muck," "a pustular scum, a decay, a choking / lifelessness" (167). From it arises "an acrid, a revolting stench" of the tepee-
library, of the "swill-hole of corrupt" city (132). The mud is not fertile. No life is left, nor any seed of life. The mud is fertile, however, because it is the source from which every life comes. This is not the dead end but a beginning, for "the beginning is assuredly / the end" (11). There is no such thing as a "FULL STOP" in the world of Paterson. The very structure of the page proves it. The poem does not come to an end with the phrase "FULL STOP," but continues. And the surprisingly symmetrical shape of "And leave the world / to darkness / and to / me" anticipates the emergence of form after the completion of descent. We have also noticed the time-element and creative elements on Page 164. And it is this very time which eventually brings about the flowering of form out of this lifeless mud.

But the poet cannot passively wait for the ascent brought about by nature and time. He wants to attain it verbally with his poem.

How to begin to find a shape— to begin again,
turning the inside out: to find one phrase that will
lie married beside another for delight . ?
—seems beyond attainment . (167)

The disintegration of form has taken place in the poet himself simultaneously. Now it is his compulsive necessity to ascend out of this muddy flux with a new poem. Otherwise he must dwell perpetually in the "bloody loam" (50) of self-annihilation. A poem is the poet turned inside out. The writing of a poem is a release from the image the poet has become—a destroying flood. To begin again in order to invent American poetry seems an impossible task.
A voice which urged him to give up writing (131) again says, "Give / it over to the woman, let her / begin again"

with insects
and decay, decay and then insects:
the leaves—that were varnished
with sediment, fallen, the clutter
made piecemeal by decay, a
digestion takes place . (168)

The "woman" is mud, the mother earth which is a female principle in Paterson. The voice is saying that the poet had better give up and hand the task over to nature. Digestion takes place after the decay, and a new life will naturally arise, as a "white hop-clover" "blossomed" "where the dredge dumped the fill" after a flood in the past (168). Piecemeal decay, leading to digestion. Dispersal leading to synthesis and metamorphosis. "By multiplication a reduction to one."

—of this, make it of this, this
this, this, this, this . (168)

It is no use trying to "rescue" the things of the past from the mud:

The past is dead. Women are
legalists, they want to rescue
a framework of laws, a skeleton of
practices, a calcined reticulum
of the past which, bees, they will
fill with honey. (169)
The "calcined reticulum" refers back to the "calcined husks" of the subterranean city at the beginning of Part 3. They are as empty and hollow-sounding as the books remaining after the fire of Part 2 (149). The way to begin again is not to try to rescue the past forms and to fit ourselves to them as bees fill their hollow reticulum with honey. There is to be no more slavery to the dead grammatical rules and sentence structures. Past frameworks should be cast away, as the library which has "nothing of" (148) us must go down. And there is to be no more building of made-arches ("bridges") which would impose calcined forms on life and language. The only way to begin is begin writing, letting "the words / fall any way at all—that they may / hit love aslant," though "it will be a rare / visitation" (169). The "fossil conch" which is "of sufficient quaintness," "hard as stone," and is as old as "death itself" (170) reminds one of Eliot's poetry. Let it lie in mud, and let it not be rescued. "The flood has done its work" (169).

After all, the slums
unless they are (living)
wiped out they cannot be re-
constituted . (170)

"The words will have to be rebricked up" (170). This drive for ascent is followed by a prose passage describing a fertility rite of an African tribe: when a warrior dies, only married women have the right and power to "extract the spirit of fertility" from the corpse (171). "Women" are the earth, which is also a father (52), a married man. And Paterson is a married man (183). Only the
poet who has felt in himself the creativity of imagination can extract the spirit of life out of the lifeless mud and attain the ascent. Only Noah Faitoute Paterson (25), the water-conqueror, can conquer the flood and make a "deathless song" "past defeats" (131).

The words will have to be rebricked up, the
—what? What am I coming to  .

pouring down? (170)

Faitoute, who fled from the roar of the falls in Part 1, now turns to the falls. The Passaic River is a life of an individual. Its source is the "oozy fields" with "dead grass," "mud and thickets cluttered with dead leaves" (15). Then it "comes pouring in above the city / and crashes from the edge of the gorge / in a recoil of spray and rainbow mists" (15). It finally flows down to the sea. The river above the falls is the past including its pre-natal chaotic stage. The falls is the present, and the river below is the future leading to death. "This moment is the only thing in which" Williams is "at all interested," and the roar of the falls which is "the roar of the present" (172) is his "sole concern" (172). In Book I, the roar of the falls is equated with speech, which is the articulation of thoughts—the water of the river (16). So here speech of the present is Faitoute-Williams’ sole concern. The fire, which is a model for Williams’ poetry, with its ever-renewed beginning instant by instant, is equated with the falls as we have seen in Part 2 (146). Here he is trying to make "a replica" of the roar of the falls "in wax" (172), that is, in an artistic form. "Not until" he has made a poem, which is also "the roar of the present" (172),
will be able to ascend out of the choking lifelessness of the rotten library-world. "The future's no answer," as the past is dead. The present moment is the only ground from which to begin. The present is the ever-fresh beginning and ever-fresh descent ("the present pouring down," the italics mine). He "cannot stay" in the library-world "to spend" his "life looking into the past" (173). Part 3 ends with a strong urge for going out:

—whatever the complexion. Let me out! (Well, go!) this rhetoric is real! (173)

Faitoute-Williams strives to get "out" of the library into the streets. The movement out of the library into the streets is, as we have seen, a movement of descent. It is an approach to the elemental ground of reality and also to the present moment. In this sense the urge expressed in "let me out!" is an urge for descent. "To begin again" (167), Faitoute-Williams turns to the descent again! Moreover, as a poem is the poet turned inside out, the phrase "let me out!" may be paraphrased as "let me make a poem!" In this case the urge is for ascent, for a poem is the flower of ascent which comes after descent. The pun, the "rhetoric," "is real!" It is real and vital in that it compresses in itself the whole paradox of descent and ascent which is ultimately the subject-matter of Book III (not only of Book III but of the whole *Paterson*): that descent is ascent, the falls is the fire, that without ascent descent is meaningless and without descent ascent is impossible.
NOTES

1 All the quotations from the text Paterson will be given only the page numbers for reference, and the text is based upon the New Directions paperback edition of Paterson (New York: New Directions, 1963).
3 op. cit., p. 357.
4 op. cit., p. 373.
5 op. cit., p. 158.
6 op. cit., p. 265.
9 op. cit., p. 330.

LIST OF BOOKS CONSULTED

PRIMARY SOURCES

SECONDARY SOURCES