

Williams Carlos Williams: Imagist, Cubist, (Objectivist)?

by

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Table of contents

Chapter		Page
Acknowledgements		
Summary		i
Opsomming		iii
1	Preface: Introduction and statement of problem	1
2	Definition of concepts	5
2.1	Imagism	6
2.2	Cubism	13
2.3	Objectivism	25
2.4	Working definitions	32
3	Williams the Imagist: 'Al Que Quiere!', 'Sour Grapes' and 'Spring and All'	35
3.1	Al Que Quiere! (1917)	37
3.2	Sour Grapes (1921)	54
3.3	Spring and All (1923)	68
4	Williams and Cubism: 'Al Que Quiere!', 'Sour Grapes' and 'Spring and All'	79
4.1	Al Que Quiere! (1917)	83
4.2	Sour Grapes (1921)	116
4.3	Spring and All (1923)	143
5	Williams' Objectivism - 'Spring and All'	169
6	Conclusion	185
7	Bibliography	190

SUMMARY

The main problem addressed in this dissertation was whether the three movements of Imagism, Cubism, and Objectivism can be said to have had a decisive role in the poetic development of William Carlos Williams in the period between 1917 and 1923 when three of his major works, **Al Que Quiere!**, **Sour Grapes**, and **Spring and All**, were published. In order to determine this, the manifestations of the principles of these movements in Williams' poetry published during this period were investigated on both a synchronic and a diachronic level.

Firstly, the concepts surrounding these movements were defined within context of the wider 'movement' of modernism. From these definitions, a number of working definitions were constructed by means of which the poetry in the three identified books could be analyzed.

In the three subsequent chapters, the poems in each of the three books were analyzed carefully in order to identify the manifestations and influences of the three movements in Williams' poetry of this period. This was done respectively in terms of Imagism, Cubism, and Objectivism, focusing on the inherent characteristics or principles of the three movements.

What emerged in terms of imagism was that the principles of brevity, direct treatment of the object, and new rhythms are most common to the earlier poems in this period, while those of immediacy, simple language, and hardness permeate most of the poetry of the period. While the imagist principles dominate more in the earlier poetry, however, they are somewhat overshadowed in the majority of the later poems, especially those of **Spring and All**.

The manifestation of the principles of cubism, on the other hand, can be seen to permeate the majority of the poems in the three books, becoming more complex and structured towards **Spring and All**. The shaping force of this movement emerged most strongly in the use of edges and juxtapositions as well as in the use of intersecting lines and planes and in the persistent defamiliarization of the poems. It further emerged that most of the predominantly cubist poems in the three books contain a large

degree of design in synthesis that points to a style that closely resembles that of the synthetic cubism in the visual arts.

The elements of objectivism that are manifested in Williams' work were mostly studied as 'premonitions' of the movement, due to the context of the period in which the poetry was produced. It nonetheless appeared that the increasing design and structure in Williams' synthetic cubism develop into an objectivist style where objectivity, precision, austerity, and specifically the autonomy of the object dominate. This proved to some extent to be true of certain poems in the two earlier books, but pronouncedly so in **Spring and All**.

Finally it was concluded that Williams developed an increasingly strong personal poetics that incorporates many of the principles of the three movements, such as a concern with the new, resulting in poetry that depends on the shaping influences of the movement to some extent, but that ultimately originates a style that moves towards a concentration of perception and emotion in structure.

OPSOMMING

Die belangrikste vraag waarvoor hierdie verhandeling te staan gekom het, is of die drie bewegings, "Imagism", "Cubism" en "Objectivism", 'n beslissende rol gespeel het in die poëtika van William Carlos Williams in die tydperk tussen 1917 en 1923, waartydens drie van sy belangrikste bundels, **Al Que Quiere!**, **Sour Grapes**, en **Spring and All** gepubliseer is. Om dit te bepaal, is die voorkoms van die grondbeginsels van die bewegings in Williams se gedigte van hierdie tydperk op beide 'n sinchroniese en 'n diachroniese vlak ondersoek.

Eerstens is die begrippe rondom hierdie bewegings gedefinieer in hul verhouding tot die wyer beweging van modernisme. Uit hierdie definisies is 'n aantal werksdefinisies opgestel waarvolgens die gedigte in die drie geïdentifiseerde bundels ontleed kon word.

In die opeenvolgende hoofstukke is die gedigte van elk van die bundels behoorlik omvattend ontleed ten einde die manifestasies en invloed van die drie bewegings in Williams se digkuns van hierdie tydperk te identifiseer. Dit is onderskeidelik met betrekking tot "Imagism", "Cubism" en "Objectivism" gedoen met klem op die inherente eienskappe of beginsels van die drie bewegings.

Wat in terme van "Imagism" na vore getree het, is dat die beginsels van beknoptheid, direkte hantering van die objek en nuwe ritmes die algemeenste in die vroë gedigte van hierdie tydperk is, terwyl onmiddelikheid, eenvoudige taal, en hardheid die meeste van die gedigte van die tydperk deurtrek. Waar die imagistiese beginsels in die vroë gedigte oorheers, word hulle egter in die meerderheid van die latere gedigte, besonderlik die in **Spring and All**, oorskadu deur 'n "cubist" strekking. Verder het dit geblyk dat die manifestasie van die beginsels van "cubism", in die meerderheid van die gedigte die drie bundels voorkom. Soos daar oorbeweeg word na **Spring and All** word dit meer verwickeld en gestruktureerd.

Die vormende krag van die beweging kom die sterkste aan die lig in die gebruik van hoeke en jukstaposisie, asook in die gebruik van sny punte en vlakke en in die deurgaanse vervreemding van die gedigte. Dit het ook aan die lig gekom dat die meeste van die oorheersende "cubist" gedigte in die drie boeke 'n groot mate van ontwerp in sintese bevat wat dui op 'n styl wat baie na aan die van die "synthetic cubism" van die beeldende kunste is.

Die elemente van "objectivism" wat in Williams se gedigte gemanifesteer is, is meestal as vooruitskouing na die beweging bestudeer, binne die konteks van die tydperk waarin die gedigte geskryf is. Dit het nogtans geblyk dat die toenemende gebruik van ontwerp en struktuur in Williams se "synthetic cubism" ontwikkel het tot 'n "objectivist" styl waarin objektiwiteit, presisie, soberheid en veral die outonomie van die objek oorheers. Dit blyk in 'n mate juis te wees vir sommige gedigte in die eerste twee bundels, maar by uitstek in die van **Spring and All**.

Ten slotte is die gevolgtrekking gemaak dat Williams 'n toenemend duidelike persoonlike poëtika ontwikkel het wat baie van die beginsels van die drie bewegings insluit, soos die bemoeienis met dit wat nuut is, wat tot 'n sekere mate oorgaan tot gedigte wat staatmaak op die vormende invloede van die beweging, maar wat uiteindelik 'n styl tot stand bring wat beweeg in die rigting van 'n konsentrasie van persepsie en emosie in struktuur.

PREFACE: INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In America [Modernism] was paralleled (and opposed) by William Carlos Williams.... All the Modernists rejected sentimentalism, personal self-indulgence and the stylistic mannerisms of the nineteenth-century. They proposed instead an impersonal and allusive context in which the shape of the poetic line would serve their austere purpose of breaking with popular tradition in order to establish a stringent 'counter-current' of learning, and indeed of honesty (Stevenson, 1984:177).

William Carlos Williams clearly played an important role in American 'modernism'. His development was also to a large extent influenced by the various movements understood to be part of Modernism. This study will attempt to determine to what extent Williams'¹ development was determined by specifically Imagism, Cubism and Objectivism through an investigation of the degree to which the elements of these movements are manifested in his poetry.

It would seem as if some controversy exists among critics as to Williams' specific place in English but more particularly American poetry. Whereas Hughes (1960:ix) regards Williams as being firmly within the fold of Imagism, being "more of an imagist than D.H. Lawrence" who was associated directly with the movement, Doyle (1982:451) is of the opinion that Williams' central poetic development is strongly independent and that he seems to have been merely sidetracked by Imagism and Objectivism. Sayre (1989:322), on the other hand, states that "precisionism and objectivism [are] the two 'isms' most closely connected to Williams". Williams' poetic development is nonetheless also closely related to the Cubist tradition which, according to Kenneth Rexroth, includes Imagism and Objectivism and "'the dissociation and rearrangement of the elements of concrete reality'" (Tomlinson, 1985:xi).

To my mind it is more strongly in the **human qualities** and **directness** which permeate his poetic technique that Williams' significance as an influence on modern poetry can be detected, and which caused him to become a major force in especially American poetry. Since there is no apparent agreement among critics regarding his dependence on one or

1 This form of the possessive will be used consistently in the dissertation.

more of the three movements mentioned above, Williams' position has to be studied in terms of his poetry written in the decisive years of modernism, namely the first decades of the twentieth century.

I would postulate that the poetic technique of William Carlos Williams develops from an imagist-based style into a poetic cubism and from there spontaneously into objectivism with a consistent development on a diachronic line into a more highly personalized style². In this development his imagism provides the basis for his predominant interest in the visual arts. I further suggest that the opinion of Doyle (1982:451) regarding Williams' independence is valid in so far as it underlines his insistence on the development of an individual style.

The central question to be answered in this study is whether or not a synchronic dynamics can be said to exist between the characteristics of the different 'movements' in Williams' poetry, and then specifically in the poems of *Al Que Quiere!* (1917), *Sour Grapes* (1921), and *Spring and All* (1923).

These books of poetry have been chosen on the basis of their perceived importance in the period between the early teens and the late twenties, a period in which Williams' style underwent a number of changes. According to Dijkstra (1978:48), the "direct influences of Pound and what might be called 'orthodox Imagism'" diminished rapidly after 1913, making room for other literary influences. Whereas Williams had thus been a "derivative poet" until the mid teens, he became a "remarkably original one" (ibid.). This development seems to have gathered impetus after the early teens before reaching a distinct maturity in the early twenties.

In this dissertation I will thus attempt to determine whether William Carlos Williams' poetic technique displays the style of any of the 'movements' of Imagism, Cubism or Objectivism as a dominant feature,

2 I postulate at this stage that Williams' small "i" imagism, as also his cubism and objectivism, is more a set of inherent characteristics than the adherence in Imagism, Cubism and Objectivism, to a formally denoted set of rules, even though he did for a time subscribe to the tenets of the Imagists. I further suggest that Williams' work should not be studied in the restricted sense of the identification of elements of these movements, but that his personalized style should be considered in its adherence to basic principles.

and also whether his poetic development can be tied to (any or all of) these movements on a diachronic level. In other words I will attempt to discover whether imagist influences can be said to feature in both cubist and objectivist poems, whether cubist elements are present in predominantly imagist or objectivist poems, and also whether objectivist elements can be detected in predominantly imagist and cubist poems³. For this reason correspondences among the characteristics of the three movements will be pointed out consistently. I will also investigate the influence of any dominant mode in the shaping of his poetic technique into an independent style in the period between 1917 and 1923.

In order to achieve this I will investigate the theoretical bases of the three movements and related concepts. From this I will construct a number of working definitions to serve as tools with which Williams' poetry in the three books can be analysed. These definitions will focus on the more technical elements of the movements in which basic trends can be identified.

I will subsequently turn to the three books of poetry in order to determine the manifestations of the elements of the three movements in Williams' poetry of this period. This part of the study will firstly focus rather extensively on Williams' use of imagism in the three books, then on his use of cubism (also in the three books), and finally on the foreshadowing elements of objectivism (mostly in **Spring and All**). In these chapters I will attempt to analyse as many poems as possible relevant to each movement while at the same time substantiating arguments with the opinions of critics on the poems as well as on Williams' development as a poet.

With regard to the selection of poems for analyses, I have decided on a comprehensive a selection of poems as possible with detailed analyses being made of the majority of the poems from these books in each of the three chapters dealing with the separate movements.

³ Since objectivism cannot, according to major critical opinion, be said to feature consciously in Williams' poetry of this period, the "premonitions" of this style as well as the inherent characteristics that can later be identified as objectivist, will be investigated.

While the chapters on Williams' imagism and cubism will be fairly comprehensive, the chapter on his use of objectivism will simply be an attempt to discover whether objectivist techniques can indeed be said to feature in the poetry to the extent of justifying viewing him as an objectivist at this early stage.

The value of this study would reside in contributing to a clarification of Williams' status as a mainline figure in twentieth century English poetry and American poetry in English. According to Shapiro (1960:507), Williams "is the godfather of nearly all the existent *avant-garde* poetry, all the free poetry that exists in the English world today". A study of his poetic technique, and especially his place in a number of movements, should be valuable in determining his influence on latter-day poets such as the Beat poets, including Allen Ginsberg (who gives recognition for Williams' influence on his style in the preface to his **Collected Poems** [1988:xix]).

As such, Williams' work might be considered an exemplar of the notion of the inception of an inner change in modern man that can also be detected in the work of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, and which is based on "his belief in the regenerative features of poetry" (Barry, 1989:361).

It is proposed to divide the dissertation into the following chapters:

- 1 Preface: Introduction and Statement of Problem
- 2 Definition of Concepts
- 3 Williams the Imagist: Analysis of Relevant Poems from **Al Que Quiere!**, **Sour Grapes**, and **Spring and All**
- 4 Williams and Cubism: Analysis of Relevant Poems from **Al Que Quiere!**, **Sour Grapes** and **Spring and All**.
- 5 Williams's Objectivism: Relevant Poems from **Spring and All**
- 6 Conclusion and Avenues for Further Research

2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

As a concept 'modernism' is easier to employ than to define. At its broadest it refers not just to innovation in literature but to the radical remaking of all the arts that went on in Europe and America in the years before 1914.... [In modernism] nothing can be taken for granted in literary form; there must be no unthinking reproduction of what is already familiar; conscious aesthetic attention is essential... (Bergonzi, 1987:408).

Modernism, if taken to be situated in the period between 1910¹ and the 1940's, embraces the theories of a variety of often divergent movements including Futurism, Imagism, Projectivism, Vorticism, Dada, Surrealism, Cubism, and Objectivism. Most of these movements did, however, emanate from the same impulse, which was primarily the urge to break with tradition. In the three movements focused on in this study, the shared modernist grounds provide a vital point of departure².

There are a wide variety of opinions on what exactly Imagism, Cubism and Objectivism are, and the boundaries between the movements are at times extremely vague. Although Henry Sayre is thus probably correct in stating that "at that time [the first decades of the twentieth century], and especially in America, what seemed more important was what the various [avant-garde] styles had in common" (1989:322), the nature of this study necessitates as meticulous an investigation as possible of the main '-isms' connected to Williams.

In this chapter I will thus examine a number of definitions of the three movements and surrounding concepts (specifically dealing with poetry) as articulated by a number of critics. I will then attempt to arrive at working definitions to be used in the remainder of the study.

For purposes of clarity I will initially concentrate on each of the three movements individually before studying boundaries and interrelations

¹ Virginia Woolf observed: "in or about December 1910, human character changed" (Bergonzi, 1983:407).

² Stevenson (1984:177) accordingly states that, roughly, "we can take Modernism to refer to the breach with nineteenth-century Romanticism deliberately instituted by Pound, Eliot, Joyce and others in Europe, in the 1920's". Although this statement is somewhat limiting in terms of the period of modernism, it addresses the same concern as that of Bergonzi.

among them. I will also attempt as far as possible to situate these movements within the wider framework of modernism.

2.1 Imagism

Being the movement which had the most direct shaping influence on Williams (due to the fact that he adopted a more individual approach in his later poetry, and also because of the fact that it encompasses many elements that can be detected in both Cubism and Objectivism), Imagism has to be defined carefully.

Imagism, according to Press (1969:30), is "the only poetic movement of the century that has profoundly altered the course of English verse". As Leavisite as this statement might seem, it can be seen quite distinctly in the poetry of William Carlos Williams that the changes wrought by this movement, with its concern for change, had a lasting effect, causing Williams to break with traditional influences and pursue a more personal poetics.

Generally, Imagism is viewed as having flourished in the period between 1909 and 1917, although the name (at that stage with the French spelling, *Imagiste*) was only introduced by Ezra Pound around 1912. Stanley Coffman in the **Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics** (1979:377) thus states that Imagism "refers to a concept of poetry associated with a school or movement that flourished between 1912 and 1917". According to Bradbury and McFarlane (1976:229), Imagism as a movement contained three distinct phases:

- 1 Hulme's 1909 group of obscure, non-combative poets...;
- 2 Pound's much more ambitious and belligerent 'school of 1912'; and
- 3 the post-Poundian Imagists... dubbed 'Amygists' [by Pound], after Amy Lowell's "takeover".

From these views it seems that Imagism can be said to have been a major movement in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the period in which Williams' style developed most crucially.

According to Packard (1989:98), Imagism is "the intensive use of representational or picture words in poetry". He further states that, at its most concentrated level, it "simply presents an image and allows the image to carry the entire poem". The Imagist poet thus refrains from suggesting any implications or providing any interpretation of his image. This definition, although pointing out an important aspect of the imagist poem, is rather simplistic in that it takes no account of the more technical aspects of the movement.

In *The Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Shaw (1972:196) states that the Imagists believed that poetry "should employ the language of common speech, have complete freedom in subject matter, create new rhythms, and present clear, precise, and concentrated images". Likewise, Peck and Coyle (1984:40) point out the simple structure of the Imagist poem: "a hard, precise description of the scene", adding that this is followed by a metaphorical comparison.

Before evaluating some further, more penetrating definitions, it would be functional to take an orientating look at the guidelines and 'manifestos' of a few of the more prominent members of the movement, namely Pound, Hulme (who provided the philosophical impetus), and F.S. Flint.

Although he wrote only a small number of Imagist poems, the philosopher T.E. Hulme initiated many of the early theories of Imagism, and his ideas certainly form the theoretical foundation of Imagism. Around 1909, according to Waldrop (1985:75), Hulme gave 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry' in which he stated that a poet, if moved by a certain landscape, "selects from that certain images which, put into juxtaposition in separate lines, serve to suggest and to evoke the state he feels". He further stated that "two visual images form what one may call a visual chord. They unite to suggest an image which is different to both". These statements contain a number of very important aspects regarding images and Imagist poetry, namely the importance of **juxtaposition**, as well as the use of an **image** to demonstrate a **feeling**, with the implication of **immediacy**. In Williams's poetry the rendering of a feeling or situation is a central concern, specifically in his imagist poems.

In Hulme's theory, the feeling evoked by a poem is regarded as being just as important as the object or image presented. Indeed, according to Juhasz (1974:20), the image presented in the Imagist poem "is the 'thing' itself, but **as perceived by the poet**; that is, the image has to be impression or 'sensation' (Hulme) as much as it is object" [my emphasis]. This implication of subjectivity which can be linked to perspectives in the Imagist poem is central not only to a study of imagism, but also to the essential distinctions that can be made among imagism, cubism and objectivism as will be shown in the course of this study.

At this stage it should suffice to mention that the Imagist poet, although striving towards an objective presentation of the image, instils a distinctly subjective element in his poetry through the very fact that the image, which becomes the poem, is created or presented through the perspective of the poet, indicating his perception of a scene or feeling. Williams, for example, increasingly struggles for diminished authorial presence in his poems.

Hulme's theory profoundly influenced Pound's ideas on Imagism and the image, from which Williams derived most of the initial imagist characteristics in his work. Although he did not initiate Imagism as a 'school', Pound's critical writings do provide a clear suggestion as to his own views on Imagism. In the magazine **Poetry** in 1913, according to Waldrop (1985:74), Pound wrote that an 'image' "is that which presents an **intellectual** and **emotional** complex in an **instant** of time" [my emphasis]. The image is thus not merely the presentation of the external elements of the object, but also its inner components³.

Even before this, however, Pound stated that he and Richard Aldington agreed on three principles of Imagism (which appeared in an article by Flint titled 'Imagisme') in 1912, namely:

- Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective.

³ This would also be what Juhasz (1974:31) implies by stating that 'image' "describes sense experience: that which the eye sees, the ear hears, and so on... it is difficult to pin down a poetic image".

- To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
- As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome (Juhasz,1974:41).

The agreement on these three tenets, according to Bradbury and McFarlane (1976:230), constituted the first act (certainly the first conscious act) of the new school.

Pound went even further in his critical endeavours in compiling 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', which, according to Bradbury and McFarlane (1976:231), were intended as "a little manual for the 'candidate' wishing to write the kind of 'harder and saner' poetry". In this he urges the 'candidate' to "use no superfluous word..."; not to use an expression such as 'dim lands of peace' that dulls the image; to "go in fear of abstractions..."; and not to consider the art of poetry to be any simpler than the art of music. Pound's very personal stamp on the movement is evident in these statements, and he certainly contributed much to the movement as such, as well as inspiring William Carlos Williams to make use of its principles in developing his personal poetics.

In 1915 Amy Lowell enlarged on the original principles of the movement by expanding them to six, which are in short:

- To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the *exact* word.
- To create **new rhythms** - as the expression of new moods and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods...
- To allow **absolute freedom** in the choice of subject...
- To present an **image** (hence the name: 'Imagist'). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous...
- To produce poetry that is **hard and clear**, never blurred nor indefinite.
- Finally, most of us believe that **concentration** is of the very essence of poetry (Press,1969:43)[my emphasis].

According to Waldrop (1985:74), two characteristics of Imagist poetry stressed by Pound, Flint, and Lowell, are "the use of images and the use of free verse". There is also a close relation between the two in that the image controls the form of a poem.

With the above tenets in mind, the definition proposed by Coffman (1979:377) provides quite a balanced view in stating that Imagism is

a belief in the short poem, structured by the single image or metaphor and a rhythm of cadences, presenting for direct apprehension by the reader an object or scene from the external world, and refusing to implicate the poem's effect in extended abstract meaning.

This definition, although incorporating the most important theoretical elements of the movement, does not recognise the fact that the Imagist idea of brevity does not necessarily imply short poems, although the initial efforts do seem to indicate this. According to Sayre (1989:313), it is rather a question of control or regulation than of length.

The application of brevity in this more extended sense is clear, specifically in the mature work of Williams in which he still incorporates the Imagist tenet of direct treatment in building his poem around one central image.

Although Imagism might thus seem to be a theoretically well-defined movement, there are still a number of difficulties, especially regarding the application of the theories by the various poets. The difficulty of, for example, presenting 'an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time' is evident in the technical struggles of the poets. This necessitates a look at some more penetrating definitions.

Juhasz (1974:18) indicates, to my mind, the essence of the matter when he states that, "whether or not one wishes to classify that fluid assemblage of poets as a movement or school," they all envisioned change in the contemporary manner, specifically Williams, Pound, and Stevens. The aesthetics of Imagism thus rest primarily on the concept of change. Juhasz also points out that Imagist theory "attempts to stress the **objective**, the **particular**, the **precise**, the **concrete**, the **visual**" [my emphasis] (1974:18).

All these elements of imagist theory indicate an essential concern with hardness in poetry, causing Bradbury and McFarlane to state that Imagism "is perhaps best viewed as a doctrine of **hardness**, the commonest, widest-ranging concept in the movement's vocabulary" (1976:238). This hardness refers not only to the selection of objects to present (subjects), but also to the technical aspects of presentation itself. This specific characteristic of Imagist verse explains Williams's attraction to the hard edges of Cubism.

Pound, according to Bradbury and McFarlane (1976:236), takes Imagist theory a considerable step forward from the initial basis provided by Hulme. As his doctrine develops, it "accommodates not only metaphoric or superpository complexes, but any kind of utterance that is direct, unembellished and economical". It is thus not surprising that Juhasz views the metaphor as being one of the most important devices used by the Imagists to overcome "the difficulty, if not futility of coming anywhere near to handling over sensations bodily: of being 'objective'" (1974:22). This includes not only the rendering of objects and states of being, but also of events.

The mistake of many of the Imagist poets, according to Whalen (1981:33), was that they "mistook simple selection of objects for actually saying something profound". Juhasz elaborates on this problem by stating that the Imagist poet has to "state and stress one aspect, or pole, of the complex that is the total experience, yet in such a way that it will imply or evoke the other" (1974:21).

Another important aspect concerning the image mentioned by Juhasz, which also harks back to Hulme's ideas, is that it is "the representation - in language if it is a poetic image - of sense experience. It may be created with literal language, figurative language, or symbolic language: with metaphors, symbols, or neither" (Juhasz,1974:31).

Pound, according to Waldrop (1985:76), insists on the essential dissimilarity of Imagism and Symbolism, pointing to the fact that a symbol has a fixed value, whereas the Imagist's image has variable significance, although he does recognize the fact that Imagism owes much to

Symbolism. Juhasz (1974:32), elaborates on Pound's opinion by remarking that,

[w]hereas the image itself can be used as a symbol, it cannot be used as a metaphor.... A symbol has to be symbolic, pointing beyond itself and not meaningful for its own sake alone. In metaphor, on the other hand, meaning is created by, and contained within, the relation established between two terms, each of which must therefore be significant in its own right for a meaning to be established.

He also uses this to motivate the Imagists' use of metaphor to "express the complex goals of the Imagist poet" (Juhasz,1974:32). This use of metaphor is of such fundamental value that it can be detected in most of the movements that have roots in Imagism. Indeed, according to Dijkstra (1978:24), the tenets of Imagism "were all contained in the theories associated with the movements of painting that took their cue from Cézanne".

Dijkstra (1978:24) also asserts that "the first of Flint's requirements for an Imagist, the 'direct treatment of the "Thing", whether subjective or objective', was a basic concern of Cézanne's, and of nearly all the painters who came after him". This consideration assists in approaching the visual and emotional unity of painting in the work of the cubists and objectivists, while other imagist considerations such as hardness, brevity and freedom in the choice of objects are also present in the work of these poets.

Exactly how important the role played by these elements is in Williams's work after the initial imagist period will be discussed in the following chapter. At this stage, however, it remains to determine what the other main forces in his career constitute. Being historically closest to Imagism, cubism's characteristics will be addressed first.

2.2 Cubism

Although usually connected with the visual arts, cubism has been linked with poetry in the first decade of the twentieth century by a European poet such as Guillaume Apollinaire, who fashioned his work on the paintings of leading Parisian cubists such as Picasso and Matisse. Likewise, William Carlos Williams was fascinated by the direction taken by the modern painters to whose work he was introduced specifically in the period surrounding the New York Armory Show of 1913⁴.

Unlike Imagism in poetry, cubism does not constitute a specific movement in either painting or poetry to the extent that it can be regarded as a 'school' with a number of specific tenets. It is rather a way of thinking shared by a group of artists and which is manifested in different ways in the work of individuals. In fact, according to Mathews (1988:275), cubism itself "cannot be thought of as a self-contained moment in the history of the arts any more than it can be regarded as a break with history".

According to Anna E. Balakian in the **Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics** (1979:174), cubism is the name given (in mockery) by Henri Matisse in 1908 to the new school of art in Paris which, under the leadership of Picasso and Braque, attempted to represent modernism. They primarily turned away from the "reproduction and imitation of nature", thus working with the other movements of this period towards the breakdown of "the belief in representation" (Mathews,1988:276).

In his **Les peintres cubistes**, Guillaume Apollinaire specifically states that "cubism differs from the old schools of painting in that it aims ... at an art of conception, which tends to rise to the height of creation" (Perloff,1981:111). As such later developments in the arts as Dada and surrealism, cubism also made "radical efforts to call attention to the work as man-made, as artifice, and thus to break the mimetic illusion" (Riddel,1974: 17).

⁴ The specific magnitude and details of this has been explicated sufficiently by a number of critics, Bram Dijkstra with his **Cubism, Stieglitz, and the Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams: The Hieroglyphics of a New Speech** (1978), and Christopher MacGowan's **William Carlos Williams's Early Poetry: The Visual Arts Background** (1984), being among the most prominent.

According to Burbick (1982:112) an effort was only made in 1912 by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger to explain cubism to the world. At this stage

it was clear that 'mimesis' or illusionist space was in the process of being dismantled by the visual modernists at the same time as narration was undergoing extreme experimentation by writers such as James Joyce, T.S. Eliot and Gertrude Stein.

Even at this early stage the parallel developments in visual and literary arts can be detected.

Another aspect of the work of the cubists mentioned by Balakian is the fact that, "while retaining concrete forms and living entities as subject matter, they appeared to reduce them to simplified or stylized geometric patterns" (1979:174).

Likewise, in **The Dictionary of Literary Terms**, Shaw (1972:102) defines cubism as a style of painting and sculpture that "emphasises the formal structure of a work of art and the reduction of natural forms to geometric equivalents". Shaw then continues to define cubist poetry as attempting to "fragment the elements of an experience and then to rearrange them in a new synthesis".

As is usually the case with dictionary definitions, the matter is rather over-simplified, making no mention of the distinction between the two main phases of cubism, viz. analytic and synthetic cubism. I will attempt to clarify this at a later stage by specifically linking it to Williams's poetic development. At this stage it is, however, necessary to look at the more technical elements of cubism, especially when translated into the medium of poetry.

In pointing out the differences between cubism and photography (in spite of the fact that cubism did to a large extent influence the development of what can be termed 'straight' photography), H.M. Sayre mentions two very important elements of the movement in New York concerning its subject matter and style:

- In the first place, as interested as cubism was in depicting objects in their most reduced structural form and in emphasising their materials and surface textures, it preeminently depicted, especially in collage, the most **commonplace** and **banal** objects ... [his emphasis]
- Secondly, rather than originating an aesthetic position that 'straight' photographers sought to follow and emulate, cubism sanctioned as modern a **vernacular aesthetic** that by 1910 was long established as a predominantly **American idiom** [my emphasis] (1989:331).

These two characteristics indicate the most significant component of cubism in its translation from the visual arts to literature, specifically in the work of Williams where it points to his life-long struggle with the American idiom and his concern with every-day objects in his poetry.

Burbick (1982:112) mentions an important aspect of cubism that is usually overlooked in definitions of the movement. After pointing out that the cubists used shifting planes to analyze the 'object' and thus translated a figure or still-life into a sequence of **intersecting planes** within a **shallow depth**, he continues to state that "object-presentation in both analytic and synthetic cubism, though radically diminished, never completely vanished".

In the study of the influence of cubism on the development of movements such as objectivism, this is of the utmost important in that it explains to a large extent why the shift to objectivist techniques was such an easy and even obvious step to take for most poets. (The details of this transition and its role in the similarities of cubist and objectivist techniques will be dealt with in the final part of this chapter whereas the question of its influence on Williams's work will be addressed in the subsequent chapter.)

Cubism thus strove to represent objects by means of intersecting planes reduced to a shallow depth, or, in the words of Mathews (1988:286), sought "to exploit the flatness of the canvas to suggest anything that is not flat". The main problem that arose out of this was that of perspective.

Cézanne, for example, had "stretched the possibilities of painting ... by rejecting the unities demanded by traditional techniques of perspective" (MacGowan,1984:56). His paintings thus ignore the limitations of its apparent angle of vision by depicting the isolated details of a fragmented object.

Mazzaro (1973:40) mentions Wylie Sypher's opinion in this regard, namely that the world of a cubist work can have no contours but that it varies with the angle from which one sees it. He takes this as implying that the perspectives of a cubist work "define the identity of things as the view one takes of them".

It would thus seem that the flatness (or two-dimensional qualities) of a cubist picture complicated the perspectives by making the facet planes (three-dimensional space) introduced by the artist less perceptible. Here Mazzaro (1973:41) refers to Clement Greenberg's view of the problem (in **Art and Culture**), namely that the literal flatness of the picture plane had to be kept separate from the depicted flatness of the facet planes "to permit a minimal illusion of three-dimensional space to survive between the two".

One way in which the problem of perspectives in cubism was addressed was the use of Simultaneism which, according to Dijkstra (1978:69), presented a special challenge to Williams. In the first issue of **291**, Simultaneism in painting was defined as

the simultaneous representation of the different figures of a form seen from different points of view, as Picasso or Braque did some time ago; or - the simultaneous representation of the figure of several forms, as the futurists are doing (Dijkstra,1978:68).

In this representation the use of colour played an important role. Not only was it employed to create contrast, but often it was also used to foreground an object by ceasing to be presented as "the quality of an object" (Mathews,1988:279).

Simultaneism in poetry is, however, quite another matter due to the abstract nature of the genre. In order to achieve it, the poet has to

present the reader with a multitude of points of view on a subject which can create a more or less simultaneous effect through juxtaposition.

According to Dijkstra (1978:68), the cubists thus selected certain elements of an object or number of objects in order to arrange it in such a manner that it can be "instantaneously perceptible". This element of cubist paintings can also be translated quite successfully to poetry as can be seen in a poem such as Williams's 'The Red Wheelbarrow'.

According to Burbick (1982:112), a "major technical innovation resulting from modernist experimentation in the visual and verbal arts was the development of collage". This technique, which was first introduced by Picasso and Braque, presented another way out of "the problem of flatness that the perspective of cubism raised" (Mazzaro,1973:44), and that could not be solved by the use of colour alone.

By affixing material from real life such as cigarette boxes or pieces of material to the canvas, the artist could now create the illusion of depth by, according to Greenberg,

the contrast between the affixed material and everything else [which] gives way immediately to an illusion of forms in bas-relief, which gives way in turn, and with equal immediacy, to an illusion that seems to contain both - or neither (in Mazzaro,1973:44).

The most prominent aspect of the collage which emerges from this description is the fact that it creates contrast; an aspect that permeates all phases of the movement in its concern for hard edges. Cubism works with juxtaposition rather than perspective. Likewise, a sense and appearance of edges pervade the work of cubist poets in the form of vocabulary, poetry-prose contrasts, and a general hardness.

It is with the introduction of the collage and its materialising of space that the shift from analytic to synthetic cubism can be said to have originated, although, according to Mazzaro (1973:45), some critics argue that synthetic cubism only began when Picasso carried the collage literally into the literal space in front of the plane by "cutting and folding a piece of paper in the shape of a guitar and gluing and fitting it to four taut strings and other pieces of paper".

This certainly marked the beginning of a tendency to attribute a kind of organic existence to inanimate objects which is, according to Dijkstra (1978:66), closely related to the cubist practice of materializing space.

It would thus seem that cubism initially involved the analysing of an object in order to identify the significant elements which would then be rearranged in a new two-dimensional synthesis. With the advent of the collage, however, the synthesis acquired a new dimensionality which imbued the work of art of the synthetic cubist with tactile elements of real life, thus taking art even further away from 'mimesis' and representation towards presentation.

While some critics thus place the conception of synthetic cubism with Picasso's developing of the collage, other critics, such as Henry Sayre, tie it to Juan Gris's response to Picasso's initial analytic cubism. For Gris, according to Sayre (1983:33), the shift of cubism from an analytic to a synthetic art "was intimately tied to a redefinition of the function of analysis itself". This implied the organizing of the things in the canvas by means of "an overlying abstract design".

A more in-depth definition of the distinction between the two phases of cubism is that advocated by Riddel (1974:138) in a discussion of the work of Charles Sheeler. According to Riddel, analytic cubism "decomposes a recognizable world of things into the elementary abstraction of lines, shapes, masses and colors", whereas synthetic cubism "brings identifiable things into a single plane of relations which preserves the particularity of the thing even as it reveals the 'subtler particularization' of relations".

A very fundamental question to be addressed in this regard is whether these obviously "painterly" qualities of cubism can be translated effectively to poetry, which is of necessity a two-dimensional art. In such a 'translation', a move towards synthetic cubism in poetry would seem to imply that elements of real life (such as experience, speech patterns, etc.) would have to 'intrude' on the artistic premises of the poem in an organized fashion.

Even if this can to a certain extent be achieved, there still remain a number of elements associated with cubist painting that might present

problems, a prominent one certainly being cubism's reduction of shapes to geometrical forms.

According to Mazzaro (1973:49), "the **language** of geometry is **not** geometry" [my emphasis], and Cézanne's statement regarding painting, that nature should be represented by means of the geometrical forms of the cylinder, the sphere, and the cone, as well as the cubist's tendency "to 'destroy' objects by reshaping them into 'pictorial facts'", is very difficult to equate with literature.

One way of attempting to solve this problem is to look at the techniques employed by Juan Gris, who, according to Mazzaro (1973:49), tried to translate painting into 'poetry' by incorporating 'poetic' elements into his paintings. Mazzaro also indicates that what is usually considered to be 'cubist poetry' entails qualities such as the emphasising of the obscure, the disjointed, and the jerky which Appolinaire employed in the verse of his *Alcools* (1913). These elements are not, however, common to the work of either Williams or Gris.

Gris's 'poetry' is described by Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler in his **Juan Gris, His Life and His Work**, as

'signs' used as 'emblems': 'They are a knife or a glass. They are never symbols, for they never have a dual identity....' By their repetition in one or a sequence of paintings these signs become 'rhymes' (Mazzaro,1973:50).

As in imagism, this use of 'signs' is thus clearly on the level of metonymy, rather than that of metaphor. In line with the structuralist theories of Roman Jakobson, the metonymic defines itself "by succession and contiguity, and thus asserts the order of a diachronic or temporal sequence" (Riddel,1974:124). In the cubist work of Gris, and also in the poetry of Williams, a set of horizontal relations thus evolves as a number of elements or signs are used on a contiguous level.

Gris, whose cubism is described by Dijkstra (1978:173) as being a very personal brand "which joined a clear love for the natural forms of concrete materials with the 'orthodox' solidification of intangible spatial qualities", then completed these 'rhymes' by altering Cézanne's

prescriptions regarding geometry so that a bottle is made **out of** a cylinder (whereas Cézanne would turn a bottle **into** a cylinder) [my emphasis].

Furthermore, according to Perloff (1981:126), "Gris's 'real' objects are seen as through a distorting lens; they are rigidly subordinated to the geometrical structure of the painting". The effect of this is that the structure of his painting draws attention to itself, using geometrical forms to foreground objects.

In poetry, Gris's techniques could thus be applied by repeating signs in an unconventional rhyme. From this a poetry results that contains distinct cubist characteristics, especially when used jointly with other foregrounding techniques such as language, syntax, punctuation, spacing, etc., which give words as much prominence as the collage gives objects from real life.

The concept of foregrounding takes on an important role in cubist literature, where words are taken from their former relationships in sentences to make them more prominent and give them more significance.

Victor Shklovsky's view of art as 'defamiliarization' seems specifically relevant here with notions such as the one that art exists "that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone **stony**" (Lemon & Reis, 1965:12). His opinion that the image is "not a permanent referent for those complexities of life which are revealed through it; its purpose is not to make us perceive meaning, but to create a special perception of the object" (Lemon and Reis, 1965:18) is also applicable to the cubist's work.

According to Dijkstra (1978:140), "the arrangement of words on a page takes on as much importance for the poet as the careful arrangement of natural forms and structures on a canvas for a painter". The use of objects in unusual conjunctions, whether in a painting or a poem, thus causes an awareness of their individual significance as objects.

Even though, in cubism, "any vestige of the sense that visual representation has the power to come to terms with the real world and to penetrate our involvement with it" (Mathews, 1988:276) has vanished, the

cubists still sought to establish some link with this 'reality'. The synthetic cubists accordingly strove towards an increased dimensionality in their art; not by attempting to bring it closer to real life, but by bringing the real world into their work, thus demystifying our relationship with the world.

In this regard Gris's synthetic cubism differed significantly from analytic cubism in that it retained the recognizability of the motif, according to MacGowan (1984:103-4), with his aesthetic insistence on "the autonomy of the finished composition, and the composition's roots in clearly seen and felt particulars". He thus moved away from the severely fragmented picture of the analytic cubists towards establishing links with the real world in objects of which the details have been synthesized to identifiable proportions, endowing the work with an extended dimensionality. Familiar things are thus used in unfamiliar contexts, instead of objects being fragmented to a level where they cease to have any familiar characteristics for the viewer.

Mazzaro (1973:54-56) identifies the use of "time-shifts within a sequence of occurrences", as well as the alternation and contrasting of different kinds of literature such as prose and poetry, as creating a similar dimensionality in cubist literature, a dimensionality that often incorporated the real world through things such as every-day language.

This mode of writing is not, however, on the same level as that of visual art, specifically due to the fact that literature does not have the immediacy of a visual work of art. In this regard, according to Dijkstra (1978:53), a painting represents "a moment of perception", consisting of "a field of experience made instantaneously perceptible". It is thus a moment in time that is lifted out of the sequence of time in the manner of photography, with the important difference that it applies a large measure of selectivity.

Dijkstra (1978:63) argues that the poetic unit which results from an attempt to achieve immediacy constitutes a temporal process (in so far as it has to be read) that is also present in a painting: "for it takes time to scrutinize a painting in detail", and just as in poetry, "the details can be

examined in any order desired". Except for process, then, the poetic unit or painting is for Dijkstra outside the sequence of time.

Although the first part of this argument does have some value in proving (or trying to prove) that the poem achieves the effect of not being bound by temporality, the nature of poetry forces the reader to grapple with the details in a specific order. The final effect created by the poem is still more dependent on the poet's interpretation of a scene or event than that created by a painting. When a poet thus achieves the effect of a painting with a poem or 'poetic unit', he is still not entirely able to produce something with the same immediately perceivable qualities.

What does feature in cubist literature is the intensified view of reality of the cubist painters as well as their striving for

the further expansion of man's capacity for instantaneous perception by breaking objects into their component parts, and by thus projecting several aspects of these objects, an expanded selection of their structural properties, unto the visual field of a canvas (Dijkstra,1978:67).

This has the effect of presenting a group of objects or events, that could normally not be comprehended in an instant of perception, in one visual unit. Hence, according to Apollinaire in his *Les Peintres cubistes* (1913), the objective of art has to be "to embrace at a glance the past, the present, and the future" (Mathews,1988:286).

In literature a work such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* could thus be said to have cubist characteristics in breaking experiences into their 'component parts' in an extended, but still intense, view of reality. These elements of the cubist paintings are even more specifically rendered in poetry, as a more condensed mode of writing where several aspects of an object or experience can be 'projected' onto the page in a poetic unit.

The description of Mathews (1988:287) of Picasso's *Man with a Mandolin* gives some important hints regarding a transition of cubism from painting to poetry. He states that the whole picture (which is still part of Picasso's analytic cubist work) consists of a number of "unpredictable shifts, changes of direction, reappraisals" [my emphasis]. These three elements of the painting, while pointing towards

simultaneism, are also fundamental to the collage, and can be pursued with some success in cubist literature.

Riddel (1974:17) quotes E.H. Gombrich as stating that cubism disallows us the reference point of an ideal meaning and that it 'scrambles clues'. This works with the changes in direction, shifts, and reappraisals in creating an art that requires a high level of concentration; both in composing and in viewing. A cubist poem, as also a cubist painting, thus often renders something new that is hardly obvious and that has to be worked for.

The novelty in such works, according to Riddel (1974:220-1), is "a new syntax of relations, not simply a rhetorical shock. It is generated by the displacement of a center.... The 'novel' is that which at its disclosure cannot be referred back to a meaning that precedes it". The cubist work thus becomes self-referential, gaining autonomy.

This characteristic of the cubist work makes it, to a large extent, compatible with objectivist poetics in that not only the object of the painting or poem, but the painting or poem itself gains a structured autonomy.

According to Pierre Reverdy's definition of the image, quoted by Rothwell (1988:304), it might not arise from a comparison, but from a reconciliation of two realities that are more or less distant (loosely translated from the French). Rothwell (1988:304) interprets this as indicating that,

far from being, as many critics have assumed, simply a different type of verbal figure, *l'image* seems... to offer a means of organizing whole poems by the juxtaposition, or *rapprochement*, of objects within the figural space of the text.

In this cubist definition it would thus seem that the theories of imagism and objectivism meet in cubism in the sense that the image of the imagist is extended to comprise the juxtaposition of objects; in structuring a poem that moves towards the structured autonomy of the objectivist poem. I postulate at this stage that this is especially true in the work of Williams, even if it might not be the case in the development of other poets. The

basic qualities of the movements do seem to be sufficiently related and similarly orientated to indicate some compatibility.

In his *L'Esprit Nouveau* which, according to Sayre (1983:33), gave synthetic cubism its name, Gris stated that "this painting is to the other [i.e., the analytic cubism of Picasso and Braque] what poetry is to prose". Sayre then also states that the main characteristic of Gris's work which gave it this character, was the fact that his "analysis of the world became consciously **selective**" and that this was tied to the ultimate goal of "fitting the world into the overall design and unity in his canvas" (1983:33).

The most important element arising from this discussion of Gris's synthetic cubism seems to be the prominence of **design and unity** as well as **selectivity** in its technique. Just as Imagism lacked sufficient structure in the presentation of images, analytic cubism also gave too little consideration to design in concentrating on the fragmentation of the world in the presentation of objects.

While Gris thus compares synthetic cubism to poetry and contrasts this with the 'prose'-like qualities of analytic cubism, it seems that (should the view of cubism as a middle-ground between imagism and objectivism hold) analytic cubism with its lack of structure is closer to Imagism, whereas synthetic cubism can be viewed as being closer to the concern with design of objectivism.

A poet with an interest in the techniques of the synthetic cubists would thus find the theories of objectivism particularly attractive. It is even possible that poetry that was initially fashioned on these painterly techniques, could display objectivist characteristics long before the actual advent of intentional objectivist poetics.

This is accentuated by the fact that Henry Sayre (1983:20) calls attention to a concern central to most of the movements of this time, particularly cubism and Precisionism (but certainly also objectivism), namely the "attempt to balance a radically personal vision with the scrupulous measure of aesthetic form".

Precisionism and objectivism, according to Sayre (1989:322), are the result of a collision of movements and 'isms', and are both "profoundly synthetist in spirit" and have their roots in a "broadly-based machine aesthetic". He also mentions that they are "the two 'isms' most closely connected to Williams".

Although precisionism is thus on a number of occasions viewed by Sayre as being an important part of Williams' poetic development, objectivism will be studied more extensively, being the most prominent force in his later poetry.

2.3 Objectivism

Defining Objectivism presents a number of difficulties in that the movement itself only originated in the early 1930's whereas its general characteristics can already be detected in the work of a number of poets in the twenties. In order to determine an appropriate working definition, it would, however, be purposeful to examine the formal theories of Objectivism.

The prominent role played by William Carlos Williams in the development of an objectivist poetics cannot be denied. Accordingly, in his **Concise Oxford Companion to American Literature**, James Hart (1986:292) states categorically that Objectivism was a school of poetry that was influenced by William Carlos Williams and that came to prominence in the 1930's.

While drawing attention to the fact that the movement was extremely loose, Sayre (1983:145) also points out that objectivism consisted in large part "of friends of Williams who decided to write the sort of poems Williams had been writing for years".

Although it can be viewed as a 'school' of poetry, some of the characteristics of objectivism are inherently part of the poetry of a number of poets, specifically that of Williams. This is to a large extent due to the fact that the poetics of Imagism became insufficient for the purposes of

these poets (especially in lacking structure), thus provoking an involuntary movement towards a new style.

After stating that the movement was never widely accepted and that it was abandoned early, William Carlos Williams, in his definition in the **Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics**, goes on to say that Objectivism "arose as an aftermath of imagism, which the Objectivists felt was not specific enough, and applied to any image that might be conceived" (1979:582).

When Williams, who, according to Riddel (1974:131), took "the part of a 'diluter' of Imagism", and Louis Zukofsky set about "their revisionism of the Image, which they came to call Objectivism, they pushed earlier Imagist doctrine more in the direction of being a 'structural' analysis".

Objectivism, according to Hart (1986:292), sees poetry as a process "whose form begins with the object dealt with and moves by improvisation through verbal associations inspired by the initial object".

In their poetics, Williams and Zukofsky set out the following distinction between their Objectivist poetics and that of Imagism:

The poem as an object, an object which had a significance, by its form, in addition to what the prose phrase of the poem had to say.... Imagism presented an image. You'll see all inside the poem. And trusted that to say something. But objectivism has to do with the **structure** of the poem as a **metrical invention** [my emphasis] (Riddel,1974:131).

The objectivist poem thus moves away from merely presenting an image, that is 'all inside the poem', towards giving the poem autonomy.

In his definition in the **Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics**, Williams also states that, although Objectivism is associated with Imagism, "the mind rather than the unsupported eye entered the picture" (1979:582). Paradoxically, then, according to Doyle (1982:53), "Objectivism is subjective in its own way". When the mind enters the picture, the subjective perceptions of the poet necessarily largely follow as also happens to some extent in imagism.

It would seem that the objectivist poet could never fully get away from subjectivity in dealing with his object. Doyle (1982:60) mentions the ideas expressed by Fernand Léger in the **Little Review** in the mid-1920's in this regard, namely that the creative act is a mysterious struggle between objective and subjective:

the artist's task is to attempt to see objects '*in isolation* - their value enhanced by every known means' thus enabling them to take on a degree of personality never before realized.

There is subsequently an inherent subjectivity in most objectivist poetry that does not necessarily derogate from the poem as autonomous object, but could also accord it more depth in the same sense as a cubist picture acquires dimensionality through synthesis (which is certainly also a subjective process).

From the outset Zukofsky had tied the 'movement' to photography, according to Sayre (1983:71), by defining it in terms of the photographer's method: "'An Objective: (Optics) - The lens bringing the rays from an object to a focus'". "Like photography", Sayre goes on to explain, "the objectivist poem is not merely a plain presentation of the facts, but the facts ordered, designed, raised out of the banal and into the realm of art".

The fact that the 'objective' of a lens forms an image by bringing the rays of the object into focus, according to Guimond (1968:95), results in the narrowing of the depth of the field. Thus, "less of the picture as a whole is in clear focus, but a part of the picture ('the object') is seen in very intense, clear focus". The process in which an image is objectified consequently entails both an intensification of its qualities and the obscuring of its surroundings.

This might be what Williams implied with his famous "no ideas but in things" which Mazzaro (1973:3) takes to mean "the object rather than the ego takes priority". This view ties in with the **Oxford English Dictionary's** definition of Objectivism which states:

Objectivism is the tendency to lay stress on the object and has as doctrine that knowledge of the non-ego is prior and superior to that of the ego (or part of the mind that reacts to reality and has a sense of individuality).

A large part of the theory behind this view of Objectivism belongs to the philosophical objectivism of Whitehead.

Guimond also points out that the operation of the objective of a lens is analogous to "the conventional meaning of objective as 'free from or independent of personal feelings, opinions... detached; unbiased'" (1968:96). This is important in that it confirms what is probably the first meaning that comes to mind when the term 'objectivist' is encountered.

In his **Autobiography** Williams recalls about objectivism that "'the poem, being an object (like the symphony or cubist painting) it must be the purpose of the poet to make of his words a new form: to invent, that is, an object consonant with his day'" (Mazzaro, 1973:35).

In addition to confirming a link with cubism, this statement also draws attention to the fact that the art of the objectivist must have its origins in the immediate surroundings of the poet, thus moving away from any accumulated meanings and symbols from the past. As in imagism and cubism, there is thus again a concern with the concept of foregrounding, making the stone 'stony' on a metonymic rather than a metaphorical level.

According to Dijkstra (1978:141), the theoretical implications of the concept of poetic structure

[was] the basis for [Williams'] formulation of the theory of Objectivism in the early Thirties, which saw the poem as an **autonomous object** with an **intrinsic structural necessity**, removed from the **tyranny of rhyme, conventional rhythm, and metaphor**, and constructed solely out of **words representing real things** [my emphases].

It would thus seem that the imposed structure of cubism (specifically synthetic cubism) is replaced by an innate structure that becomes essential to the objectivist poem.

At this stage it would be significant to examine the theories of Louis Zukofsky as to what he regards as objectivism in order to determine the basis of the 'school' of the early 1930's. An important essay in this regard is Tom Sharp's **Sincerity and Objectification** (1982), in which the

principal elements of Zukofsky's theory (specifically sincerity and objectification) are examined.

According to Sharp (1982:256), a major concern of Zukofsky's 1930 essay entitled 'Sincerity and Objectification: With Special Reference to the Work of Charles Reznikoff', which became the chief manifesto for the Objectivists, is the concept of poetic sincerity.

Poetic sincerity must not, however, be confused with the 'sincerity' with which Zukofsky contrasts 'objectivism' in an attempt to define the latter. This quality, according to Doyle (1982:53), "relates to the personality of the poet, rather than to his poem, and [it] involves connotation and suggestiveness".

Aside from being a chief criterion "separating 'Objectivist' work from the general and popular practices in verse at that time", Sharp (1982:256) views the concept of poetic sincerity as describing the conditions of words which satisfy that criterion. He then continues to define it as presenting "with clarity or exactitude the details of a real experience in words which are a consequence of the integrity of existence".

This again ties in with the cubist (and modernist) tendency to present rather than to imitate in that the object 'created' by the poet acquires autonomy through sincerity rather than through mere representation. The objectivist concern with the word can also be linked to this.

Accordingly Sharp (1982:257) states that "an 'Objectivist' believes that words are not only referential, but that they are also objects of experience in and of themselves". In this way words are used to present an object not only as it exists, but also as it is experienced. Indeed, according to Sharp (1982:263), Zukofsky's poetic sincerity "is a restatement and clarification of the first Imagiste prescription, direct presentation".

According to Zukofsky's theory regarding poetic sincerity, "the unreal, the counterfeitable, the 'vicious', must be omitted" (Sharp, 1982:257). This process of 'active literary omission' may then again be discussed in terms of the criterion of sincerity (regarding choice and treatment of content), but also that of objectification.

Objectification, according to Zukofsky's theory, is

the arrangement, into one apprehended unit, of minor units of sincerity - in other words, the resolving of words and their ideation into structure (Sharp,1982:260).

Sharp interprets this as signifying that objectification is itself a whole, giving a sense of 'rested totality', whereas the details of sincerity merely "suggest the wholes of which they are part". Objectification is, however, dependent upon poetic sincerity.

The structure resulting from this objectification presents an object that is for Zukofsky tantamount to "a thing in writing which 'affects the mind as such'" (Sharp,1982:260). The object of and as the objectivist poem is thus not an attempt at creation, but rather at making the same impression as would an object in reality. In order to achieve this the poet has to employ poetic sincerity.

Although the definitions of both sincerity and objectification might be of theoretic value, their applications in verse seem rather less important. Accordingly, in his explanation of examples of objectification, Zukofsky pointed out "matters of poetic structure - rhythm, length of word, accent, and line - not of content" (Sharp,1982:261), which presents a more simplified application of his theory than the theory itself would suggest.

It is even possible that this very formalist approach, although helpful, disregards more fundamentally objectivist elements such as austerity and associations in poetry to the extent of becoming ineffectual in a comprehensive study of the movement.

More elementary in objectivist work, although closely related to Zukofsky's approach, are the elements of objectivity and precision, "an aesthetic based upon revealing the **pattern, organization, and design** beneath the chaos of experience", which Sayre (1989:325) views as being the foundation of both precisionism and objectivism (my **emphases**).

These elements would also tie in with Zukofsky's remarks on **Spring and All**, namely that Williams'

exclusions of **sentimentalisms, extraneous comparisons, similes, overweening autobiographies of the heart**, of all which permits factious 'reflection about', of **sequence**, of all but the full sight of the immediate, manifest a living aesthetic [my **emphases**] (Doyle, 1982:52).

This not only confirms Williams' influence on Zukofsky's formulation of Objectivist poetics, but it also points out the importance of certain exclusions in achieving objectivity and precision.

There is, furthermore, a "profoundly formalist pull to objectivist and precisionist aesthetics" (Sayre, 1989:329). When poetic sincerity is present, authority rests in the poetic object, not with the poet or reader. The role and presence of the poet in the poem is thus reduced, consequently drawing the attention to the speech of the poem.

Doyle (1982:67) states that "while Zukofsky's expatiations, finally, offer no single clear definition of 'Objectivism' it is certainly not intended as a diametric opposite to something labelled 'Subjectivism'". Although the interest of the movement thus centres on both 'object' and 'objective', Zukofsky's theory also refers to the participation of the poet's senses and intelligence in the poetic process. This is still, however, subordinate to retaining the autonomy of the object.

From these theories it becomes clear that at least one concern is central to imagism, cubism, and objectivism, namely that of creating a single effect. According to Doyle (1982:175), "in its very name each of these 'movements' [Imagism and Objectivism] suggests a concentration on noun or thing as opposed to 'an easy lateral sliding' through a statement of abstractions easily divorced from reality". This can certainly be taken as a valid statement regarding also cubism with its concentration on form and unity of the artistic object.

2.4 Working definitions

From the above definitions it is evident that imagism, cubism, and objectivism share a number of distinctly modernist characteristics which include not only the break with tradition in a desire for freedom and a growing concern with form, but also the retreat of the artist/author/poet from a visible presence in his work to a more impersonal position. This impersonality includes also a common attempt to draw attention to the work of art as artefact by means of an instilled strangeness, or foregrounding devices, which take the shape of distortion in exaggeration as well as elimination.

The working definitions in this study have the purpose of not so much providing general definitions of the three movements, but rather to point out those concepts in the movements that might have a direct bearing on the presence and implementation of the theories in the poetry of William Carlos Williams. Although these definitions will thus have much in common with prevalent explanations of the concepts central to each movement, the focus will be on their manifestations in poetry.

Imagism, in essence, would hence refer to a style of poetry in which the clear, hard, and precise presentation of an image is of the utmost importance. This presentation is usually effected both **concretely** and **visually** through the use of **juxtaposition**, highly **descriptive words**, and **new rhythms in simple language** on no prescribed subject matter, executed with "**hardness**" (Bradbury and McFarlane, 1976:238).

To elaborate somewhat on the above, the image of the imagist can be identified in its use to demonstrate a feeling or experience with **immediacy** through the perspective of the poet, and consequently with a measure of subjectivity, but without attempts at explanation. It also presents with concentration both the external and the inner elements of an object. There is, however, a move towards **diminished authorial presence** in imagist poems.

Although cubism, unlike imagism, usually refers to the visual arts, most of its tenets can be traced in poetry, including the modernist regard for a work as artefact (which probably finds its strongest application in this

movement). It also has a number of corresponding elements with imagism, such as the use of everyday objects.

Broadly speaking, cubism in poetry would refer to a style in which **juxtaposition** is employed with a sense and appearance of **edges** in the form of vocabulary, poetry-prose **contrasts**, and a general **hardness**. It also strives for immediacy in bringing together a number of isolated details of a **fragmented** object or experience in a new synthesis.

It is in this last characteristic that a distinction can be made between two distinct types of cubism, analytic and synthetic cubism (the second developing from the first). Whereas analytic cubism concentrates more on the **fragmentation** of an object to a point of retaining almost no recognizable whole, synthetic cubism works with a **synthesising** method in bringing identifiable elements into one plane of relations where the object is preserved with a greater concern with **design** and **unity** in its technique. This would also include the organized intrusion of elements from real life in the poem where familiar things are presented in unfamiliar ways with foregrounding devices such as language, syntax, punctuation etc., in the manner of the collage.

In objectivist poetry there is the same concern with unity and specifically also with design in that the form of the poem "begins with the object dealt with" (Hart, 1986:292), and then elaborates by means of associations.

Objectivism in poetry can thus be said to imply a concern with the **structure** of a poem in a move towards giving the poem an **autonomy** which does not rest on either perception (as is often the case in imagist poetry), rhyme, conventional rhythm, or metaphor alone. This is achieved primarily by means of **objectivity** and **precision** which impart a sense of **unity** to the poem. The image is now objectified to **intensify** (or foreground) its qualities while its surroundings are obscured and any irrelevancies such as sentimentalisms and similes are excluded.

This process often involves a measure of subjectivity in that the subjective perceptions of the poet, together with structure, are inherently part of the presentation of the object as it exists, but also as it is experienced. This presentation has, however, to be executed with the sincerity of Zukofsky's

theory which implies that the role and presence of the poet in the poem is also diminished.

3 WILLIAMS THE IMAGIST: 'AL QUE QUIERE', 'SOUR GRAPES', AND 'SPRING AND ALL'

More than any of the poets closely associated with the Imagist movement - Pound, H.D., Richard Aldington, or John Peale Bishop - Williams adhered to Imagist principles. His intention was to show things -... (Stauffer,1974:344).

The essence of Williams' work is certainly his aptitude to "show things". In this Imagist (or rather imagist) principles are of fundamental importance. These principles must not, however, be mistaken for Imagist tenets, being inherent rather than formal.

After writing highly literary poetry at the beginning of his career, Williams, according to Doyle (1982:169), first succeeded to break away from the stale sense of traditional poetry "through the influence of Pound and Imagism". Williams' early development, according to Guimond (1968:29-30), "was influenced by two major concerns". The first of these was the concern in his poetry with contact with immediate experience¹, and the second that art should be a form of action. The second concern would imply that his poetry should be the presentation (or 'creation') and not representation of life. Accordingly Mayhew (1983:289) states that Williams' poems are "never pure representations.... However Imagist they may seem they rarely present a static picture: they are usually studies in... the movement of perception".

The first concern pointed out by Guimond is elaborated on by Juhasz (1974:14), who states that Williams uses metaphor in his earlier poetry "to render fully the complexities inherent in a moment of perception". Williams thus establishes contact with immediate experience by means of metaphor² and its ability to concentrate language³.

1 This immediate experience often includes "a single object, a flower, a person, a tree, [resting] motionless, poised in its presentness" (Miller,1966:344).

2 Juhasz (1974:32) sees metaphor as being "especially suited to express the complex goals of the Imagist poet" because of its way of creating "either the single image or combining images".

3 This concentrating role of metaphor in Williams' poetry does not, however, render the poem "an expression of metaphoric unity, rather it presents reality in such a way as to allow the reader to experience unity first-hand"(Walker,1984:129).

Guimond further states that the three works after Williams' first peak⁴ in **The Wanderer**, (**Al Que Quiere!**, **Sour Grapes**, and **Spring and All**) "can be considered 'descent' works" (1968:236). In these poems the myth expressed in **The Wanderer** is animated "and their techniques are derived from Imagism". This statement would imply that the poems in these three works would also contain more or less the same techniques as that of the 'seminal work', only in different stages of regression from and stagnation of that of the peak.

Although this view does provide a helpful overview of Williams' development, it is rather misleading. Williams' work in the period containing the three 'descent' works reveals a diversity of style in which the predominance of imagist techniques can by no means be assumed, and in which other 'peaks' of creative power are present. These 'peaks' would then be periods in which the techniques of cubism and objectivism are introduced to his personal poetics and style. Among the various subjective⁵ poems, fragmentations, and overtly structured poems, the presence of imagism is, however, unmistakable in a large number of poems of varying degrees of imagist 'purity'.

In terms of imagism, the influence of the theory of Imagism on Williams' development is perhaps not as important as is made out by Guimond, and the qualities of the poetry of this period are rather an inherent part of a personal style, which is also a brand of imagism.

What Doyle (1982:169) thus regards as being "distinctly American" in Williams' approach to poetry, namely his "insistence on the specific individuality of the object" as well as "the aim for 'vividness' rather than propriety", are elements of a personal style of imagism. In this style the

4 Such 'peaks' in Williams' poetic development, according to Guimond (1968:236), are "a number of periods when he possessed extremely intense visions of his relationship to his American environment.... [They are] seminal moments of Williams' life as an artist, the times when 'love and the imagination / are of a piece' for him (Pictures,197)". The 'descents' following these peaks are then periods "when he applied the themes and techniques of his seminal works to the phenomena of his environment".

5 According to Miller (1966:288), Williams' mature work "dwells in the only realm there is, a space between subjective and objective, a region of copresence...".

freedom of choice and direct treatment of the object of the Imagists are extended by Williams to imply a concentration on those elements of the object which renders it different from all other objects.

In order to determine whether any definite pattern does exist and whether any of this can be verified, it is imperative to investigate a substantial group of poems from these works in which imagism can be identified as dominant or as having an influence.

3.1 AL QUE QUIERE! (1917)

Whereas the imagist influences on Williams' first major poems, specifically those of *The Wanderer* are not all that evident, the poems in *Al Que Quiere!* reveal a definite imagist basis in specifically the treatment of the poetic object. Guimond (1968:34) accordingly states that Williams "began to apply the Imagist principle of 'direct treatment of the thing' fairly rigorously" about 1917. This would include the explanation of the significance of a subject or the statement of the attitude of the poet toward it which features strongly in this book.

The chief characteristic of *Al Que Quiere!*, according to Doyle (1982:16), is "what Kenneth Burke calls Williams' 'remarkable power of definition, of lucidity'". This is certainly an indication of the imagist basis of the book's techniques. Another important feature of the book mentioned by Doyle is Williams' establishing of his basic short line: "Poem after poem in that volume, some quiet some less so, shows surprising tautness and strength of line" (1982:172)⁶.

Walker⁷ (1984:135) mentions another aspect of the poems in this book that is also closely related to the structure of the lines, namely that "the language and rhythms of *Al Que Quiere!* (1917) are considerably more

⁶ Doyle (1982:170) also states that, from *Al Que Quiere!* on, Williams "largely escaped the tyranny of quantitative measure, employing instead a measure based on phrasing".

⁷ In his *The Transparent Lyric* (1984), David Walker investigates the foregrounding of the role of the reader in "the performance of the poem's conscious action" in the poetry or 'lyrics' of Williams and Stevens.

natural and relaxed" than in the previous books. He further asserts that this is in accordance with Pound's 1913 principles of Imagism⁸. This correlates closely with the view of Stauffer (1974:343) that a "new freedom and looseness, as well as a growing self-confidence, were Williams' greatest debt to Pound".

The first 'Pastoral' (CEP:121)⁹ in **Al Que Quiere!** gives an example of this natural language as well as of the "tautness", while also providing a hint of Williams' extended use of imagism in his subsequent work. His use of simple words, "those words all men must use" (Miller,1966:296), is especially evident in the centre of the poem.

The poem can roughly be divided into 4 parts of which the introductory and concluding lines are on a personal level in the manner of a frame, whereas the second is clearly descriptive and the third combines description with subjectivity.

In the first 7 lines the speaker sets the scene for a personalised description of an everyday scene. Even in this first part, however, Williams juxtaposes the attitudes of youth and maturity, although he doesn't create a concrete image. Despite their subjective rendering of attitudes, these lines also display the use of simple language as well as a halting new rhythm that foregrounds the juxtaposition of the egocentricity and idealism of youth and the mature attitude of wonder at the beauty of simplicity.

This rhythm is not only evident in the varying lengths of the lines, but also in the line-flow or enjambment that is executed in a jerky, halting fashion which causes both confirmation and upsetting of expectations. After the enjambment of line one into line two: "When I was younger / it was plain to me", the third line is shown to stand separately: "I must make

8 Perloff (1983:173) on the other hand states that, "by 1917 when **Al Que Quiere!** was published, Pound's imprint was no longer decisive". This statement might create the impression that Williams no longer adhered to imagist tenets. Pound's influence on Williams does, however, remain in much of the work from this period (although more implicitly in the form of imagist principles adapted by Williams).

9 For purposes of reference, CEP refers to Williams, W.C., 1966. *The Collected Earlier Poems*. New York: New Directions.

something of myself". Although this line is evidently related to the previous one, the omission of "that" forces a halt at the end of line two which upsets the expectation of flow generated in the previous line.

This occurs with more force (and in reverse order) in the second part of the poem in the direct description of the scene. Whereas line 12 is in this case revealed to stand on its own, the following line, "built of barrel-staves", flows into "and parts of boxes, all,". This irregular rhythm that is forced on the reader, as he is constantly brought to a halt or forced to continue, foregrounds the hardness of the words used as well as the new rhythm.

The sense unit created by the enjambment of line 13 to include line 14 thus draws attention to the rugged scene of outhouses "built of barrel-staves / and parts of boxes" in which the words are no less hard than the scene described.

In the second part of the poem (lines 8-14) the concrete and visual treatment of an everyday scene suggests a style that corresponds with Imagist doctrine to a large extent:

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

The imagist characteristics are specifically evident in the diction and direct presentation of the scene encountered in the houses of the "very poor". The image created in this part of the poem displays a pronounced hardness which reveals that the purpose of these houses is certainly not aesthetic, although they do possess astounding qualities for the speaker.

The subsequent lines continue with this presentation of the scene in a way that reveals the immediacy of its perceptibility, all to be taken in at a glance. These lines do, however, focus more on the inner elements of the houses such as "furniture gone wrong" and the material used for building

such as abandoned "barrel-staves" and "parts of boxes" in a hard and precise manner.

In the next part of the poem the speaker again introduces his subjective choice in the rendering of the scene, in pronouncing that, if he is fortunate (stating his attitude), it should be "smeared a bluish green" showing the weathering, since this subdued colour "pleases me best of all colours". The choice of words in these lines is particularly exact in, for example, the use of "properly" which indicates a subjective criterion that enhances the speaker's revelling in this unlikely beauty.

The final lines cause a conclusively subjective tone to pervade when the speaker states that "no one will believe" in the importance of this scene, implying his own unique sense of beauty and explaining its significance. In spite of this final subjectivity the poem is predominantly imagist in its consistent use of simple language and exact words together with rhythm. It also seems that the imagist characteristics of the second part dominate the poem to such an extent that the tones of subjectivity become secondary.

Although slightly more subjective, the second 'Pastoral' (CEP:124) has much the same overall effect. Again the poem can be divided into four major parts with the difference that the first and third parts of this poem are primarily descriptive while the second part is a subjective juxtaposition to the first, and the final part concludes with a separate and personal statement that correlates closely with the final lines of the first 'Pastoral'.

The first stanza sees the juxtaposition of the attitudes described in its two parts. In the first 7 lines a scene is created clearly and with precision, although from the perspective of the speaker:

The little sparrows
hop ingenuously
about the pavement
quarreling
with sharp voices
over those things
that interest them.

Again the false enjambments at the ends of lines 1 and 3 force a halting rhythm on the lines, foregrounding the fervid activities of the little birds and specifically drawing attention to their loud "quarreling". The reader has to come to an abrupt halt before reading this word and is then forced to continue with the next line. This constant upsetting of expectations not only imitates the movements of the sparrows, but also serves to create a contrast with the following part where each line does flow into the next.

This contrast is also present in the subject matter as the speaker, introducing his statement with "but", juxtaposes the activities of the sparrows with those of "we who are wiser". This second part is then also more subjective in showing that people, and also the speaker, tend to keep to themselves, shutting out others and keeping their thoughts and opinions concealed.

The second stanza again contains a juxtaposition, but this time within its first part. The scene presented in the first 5 lines of this poem is again imagist in the use of irregular or new rhythms, and also in the direct treatment of the object:

the old man who goes about
gathering dog-lime
walks in the gutter
without looking up.

The erratic and slow rhythm created by means of word-choice (e.g. "gathering", "dog-lime", "gutter") which stems the flow, as well as by halting line endings simulates the movements of the old man just as the activities of the sparrows are imitated in the first stanza, but also contrasts it with the precipitous hopping of the birds. This juxtaposition is enhanced by the first word of this stanza, "Meanwhile", which is right-indented to foreground it even more.

The humble tread of this old man in the simple surroundings of dog-lime in gutters is described as being "... more majestic than / that of the Episcopal minister / approaching the pulpit / of a Sunday". The apparent contradiction inherent in this juxtaposition is significantly imagist in that it intensifies the presentation of the image.

None of the images presented in this poem is, however, sufficiently direct in the imagist sense of the word. This is due to the fact that the juxtaposition of the image of the sparrows, as well as that of the old man, not merely presents an object but serves to interpret it in each case.

When the speaker concludes with a subjective statement similar to that of the first 'Pastoral': "These things / astonish me beyond words", the poem acquires a sense of subjectivity that seems to override the more **technical** imagist characteristics of the poem, unlike the previous poem. It would, however, tie in with Williams' concern with the 'direct treatment of the thing' and it does not detract from the force of the poem whose multiple juxtapositions result in the creation of a couple of concrete and visual images that are essentially still imagist.

More like the first 'Pastoral', 'Apology' (CEP:131) again shows the use of a subjective frame for an imagist core. In this case the poem opens with a subjective question posed by the poet: "Why do I write today?". This is followed by an equally personalised answer which names "the beauty of / the terrible faces / of our nonentities" as stirring him to writing.

Williams explicitly states the basis for his choice of simple scenes in these lines, the subject of the subsequent lines being as close to the earth and as simple as in the two 'Pastoral' poems. This is in accordance with Guimond's statement that "all of Williams' human subjects [in these early poems] are earthy, vital and lower class.... Their language, actions, and appearances are intrinsically unique, candid, and picturesque" (1968:39).

Aside from being subjective these lines also display a use of language that is not quite as simple as an imagist usage would require; nor are any other distinctly imagist characteristics visible. The diction does reveal a sense of concentration in the 'conceit'-like contrasts between "beauty" and "terrible faces" and also "nonentities", the latter specifically implying facelessness. It does not, however, satisfy the imagist tendency of clear, hard and precise presentation. The line-flow is consistent and the rhythm is hardly innovative. Its function would thus seem to be to create a contrast with the following lines, being linked by means of a colon.

The contrast is certainly striking in the abrupt change of language with simple constructions and words in the brief form of descriptive notes. There are no excessive words or ambivalent phrases as the scene is presented or created concretely and visually with a distinct sense of immediacy¹⁰:

colored women
 day workers -
 old and experienced -
 returning home at dusk
 in cast off clothing
 faces like
 old Florentine oak

The stanza has an imagist hardness about it that can be ascribed to the use of descriptive words, rhythm, and manner of presentation. The reader is presented with a categorical description of "colored women", virtually every line giving a separate particular pertaining to their identity and appearance.

The line-flow is instrumental in this presentation in forcing a pause after the first three lines. In the ensuing lines the rhythm is constantly disturbed as an enjambment is followed by an end-stopped line which is again followed by an enjambment and another end-stopped line¹¹. The varying line-lengths also upset the rhythm, foregrounding the unlikely and inspiring beauty present in this everyday scene.

The next 'stanza', which consists of the isolated "also", serves to juxtapose this scene with the subjective statement of the final lines. In these lines the poet/speaker mentions another inspiration for his writing, "the set pieces / of your faces stir me - / leading citizens -". The rhythm

10 The use of words in the poem further indicates the import of words in Williams' poems as a means of escaping the fact that, as Miller (1966:296) points out, "a word in itself has no meaning, but is a power of combining with other words"; Williams specifically foregrounds each word as "a thing in itself".

11 This disturbed rhythm that is used as foregrounding device throughout the book (and which remains present in Williams' subsequent work) is in line with the statement of Perloff (1983:169) that he "positions his words on the page so as to create an effect of what might be called studied clumsiness". This 'fragmenting' element of his poetry also points to his cubist poems in which it becomes even more explicitly part of the presentation.

is still broken and the juxtaposition of the hard faces of these persons with the lined faces of the common people enforces the imagist characteristics of the poem, as does the final contrast revealed in the fact that these faces have a distinct (and somewhat less profound) influence on the poet. However, the subjectivity of the statement and the lack of precise description render the lines less than imagist. Their primary function seems to be the completion of the frame within which the imagist picture is set.

Another poem in which authorial involvement is still prominent is the brief 'El Hombre' (CEP:141):

It's a strange courage
you give me ancient star:

Shine alone in the sunrise
towards which you lend no part!

Although the voice of the poet is present in the first two lines, an experience is rendered with brevity and, more specifically, immediacy. In the second couplet the experience or impression of the star as a desolate speck in the overwhelming sunrise is rendered with the same brevity and also with a closing force that can be perceived in many of the poems in **Al Que Quiere!**

In spite of its brevity, however, the poem cannot be viewed as an example of imagism. Aside from the fact that it is personalised to a large extent, it lacks the simplicity and directness of the previous poems and is certainly not a concrete presentation but rather a romantic meditation. The shaping influence of Imagism on the poem is nevertheless, to my mind, evident in the immediacy of the experience of the scene as well as in the single image.

'The Shadow' (CEP:120) seems even less imagist, specifically in its virtually traditional rhythm and ballad-like repetitions (e.g. "Soft as the bed..." and "Rich as the smell", as well as "Spring closes me in"). Yet, it does contain a number of distinctly imagist characteristics such as the concrete and visual presentation of a scene through juxtaposition.

Furthermore, according to Miller (1966:316), the poem "multiplies images of touch to universalize it until the poet is clasped in the embrace of the season, ... and everything is possessed through touch". What thus emerges in the poem is the presentation of a number of sense experiences (not merely "multiplied images of touch") that combine to give a single experience of enclosing spring.

In the first stanza the sense-experience of the softness of the impression left in the earth after the removal of a stone is described as an image of this enclosing effect of spring. This is then expanded and juxtaposed with "the smell / of new earth on a stone" in the second stanza in order to create a more complete experience. This smell is also part of the experience of the enclosing effect of spring which is in the final line declared to bring "dark to my eyes".

The image is thus not merely presented, but also to a certain extent explicated, indicating the fact that Williams developed a distinctly personal brand of imagism (or rather style based on Imagism) which made use not only of subjective frames and presences, but also of direct, personalised statements.

The forceful use of juxtaposition to present a scene which gives 'The Shadow' its pronounced imagist ring is also central to the 1915 poem, 'Chicory and Daisies' (CEP:122). The natural images in these two poems (as also in 'El Hombre' and many of Williams' earlier poems) have the same "vitality and picturesqueness" (Guimond,1968:39) as the human subjects.

Although the tension that pervades the poem points to cubist influences, the force of the juxtaposition of scenes creates another imagist picture. The first part focuses on the image of bitter chicory (a pasture and roadside pest), struggling for survival in a hostile environment. In this description the halty rhythm is specifically noticeable. The first 8 lines, dealing with the vertical thrust or growth of the stems of the chicory, consist of three separate exclamations, each being a flowing statement with enjambed lines.

The first lines of the succeeding exclamatory unit again flow until brought to a halt at the end of the third line: "Strain under them / you bitter stems / that no beast eats - / and scorn greyness!". The unexpected breach in the flow foregrounds the call for the bright blue flowers to "scorn greyness" and signals the turning point of this part with the subsequent lines focusing on their triumph. With the shift in focus comes also an acceleration of the rhythm as the features of the chicory are presented concretely: "Into the heat with them: / cool! / luxuriant! sky-blue!".

The rhythm again changes in the final lines of this part as the focus shifts once more and what seems to be the surroundings are presented in a subdued manner:

The earth cracks and
is shriveled up; the wind moans piteously;
the sky goes out
if you should fail.

The final line indicates the destructive consequences that the speaker envisages in the event of failure with a finality expressed in the only full-stop in the poem. These lines also prepare the reader for the counterpoint in the juxtaposition of chicory and daisies.

The elaborate treatment of the chicory in the first part, specifically the involvement of the speaker in the interpretation of the scene, is forcefully contrasted with the presentation in the second part. Instead of providing a description of the features of the daisies, the speaker merely presents an innocent scene involving these flowers and leaves the interpretation to the reader.

The simple language underscores this juxtaposition in revealing the peaceful qualities of the daisies in contrast to the aggressive chicory, described in much more forceful language:

I saw a child with daisies
for weaving into the hair
tear the stems
with her teeth!

It is in the simplicity and directness of this second part, as well as in the contrast between the gentle flower and the forceful action of the girl, that the imagist juxtaposition is revealed, working with the rhythm of the first part towards creating a poem with pronounced imagist characteristics. It is also important to note that this final exclamation indicates a sense of incredulity in contrast to the excitement of the preceding ones. It also underscores Williams' assertion of the significance of his subject, according to Guimond (1968:34).

What finally inhibits the poem from being imagist is the extensive use of deictic devices in its first part. Thus, the retrospective pointing of "them" in line 4 and again in lines 9 and 13 to the stems of the chicory, as well as that of "that" in line 8 to the lifting of these stems, acts with the exclamatory phrases to situate the flowers too subjectively within the description. The simple presentation of the image is consequently undermined to such an extent that the imagist presentation of the second part is rendered less effective.

In 'Love Song' (CEP:125), this time starting with the image of daisies, Williams makes use of a number of juxtaposed scenes to create the central image of the "breaking" of the seasons. Although this juxtaposition is used in accordance with the cubist method of fragmentation, forming something like the collage of the visual art, some of the scenes presented are distinctly imagist.

In the first stanza the daisies are described in lines each contributing some detail to the scene. The first line describes them as they appear: "Daisies are broken". The apparent fragmentation of the flowers is enhanced by the jerky, imagist rhythm caused by the fact that this line, as is the case in each of the lines in the rest of the stanza, is end-stopped. This has the function of foregrounding the image, specifically due to the expectation of enjambment created by the lack of punctuation at each line-end.

After this general external description, the flowers are broken down to petals in line 2 and to stems in line 3. In an imagist manner the more specific (and more inward) qualities of each are described in these lines, the petals being "news of the day" and the stems lifting "to the grass tops". The introduction of the next line with the deictic "they", however,

causes an immediate subjectivity to undermine the direct presentation of the first three lines, making the statement that the stems "catch on shoes" - which has little to do with the flowers. The effect of this pervades the rest of the stanza, rendering it more of a personal perspective than a clear and hard presentation.

The following stanza has much the same structure although the deictic element cannot diminish the imagist description of the first three as severely: "Black branches / carry square leaves / to the wood's top.". This might be ascribed to the unity of the lines resulting from the enjambment of the first two lines.

The visual hardness of this presentation, as well as the use of exact, descriptive words, renders these lines profoundly imagist. The last lines of this stanza are fashioned on the same basis as that of the previous stanza, juxtaposing the parting of the daisies and the breaking of the branches.

The third stanza introduces a decisively subjective tone, linking "your moods [that] are slow" with "the shedding of leaves", both being as sure as "the return in May!". The exclamation of the final line together with the personal pronoun situates the scene too firmly, diminishing its direct apprehension.

This is also the case in the final stanza which is introduced with "We", the scene being set "in your father's grove". The final lines, however, revert to imagism again in the precise description and simple language.

In spite of the subjective qualities that dominate much of the poem, it is also much more structured than an imagist poem, being built around a number of symmetries such as the units formed by stanzas 1 and 2 as well as that by stanzas 3 and 4. The repetition of the idea of fragmentation also creates a pattern that is quite unlike imagist practice. This seems to indicate Williams' move away from the lack of form of imagism to a more structured mode that has much in common with synthetic cubism as well as with objectivism.

The influence and effect of the use of deictic elements in Williams' poems can also be detected in 'Summer Song' (CEP:135) in which the solitary

deictic "this" in line 4 betrays a personalised angle which, together with the personal pronouns "I", "you", and "they" used in the final 6 lines, obscures the direct (thus: overtly imagist) rendition of the scene.

The image of the wandering moon is, however, presented with an unmistakable imagist style in jerky rhythms and simple language. In this presentation the rhythm also underscores the subject matter in imitating the "detached / sleepily indifferent / smile" of the "wanderer moon" through unpredictable enjambments and varying line-lengths.

The use of colour in the final lines also contributes to the visual presentation of the scene:

if I should
buy a shirt
your color and
put on a necktie
sky-blue
where would they carry me?

In this meandering it is implied that garments of the same colour as that of the moon and the morning skies would also cause an involuntary wandering. The posing of a question in these lines has the function of diminishing the direct quality of the presentation, also contributing to an overall effect that is significantly removed from imagism in spite of the evocative image.

Much more in accordance with the direct presentation of imagism, 'The Young Housewife' (CEP:136) presents a clear image of the vulnerability of the shy woman. Although the poem seems to be a personalised narration of an event, the subjectivity common to many of the other poems of this book is markedly reduced in the immediacy of the scene. The rhythm and structure of the lines also work towards an imagist presentation in which the elements of the scene are constantly foregrounded¹².

¹² Perloff (1983:171) points out that the typography of the poem is its substance in that it uses the "flatness for playful purposes". She also provides a detailed analysis of the metrical and rhythmic elements of the poem.

Each of the three stanzas of the poem starts with a description of the scene perceived by the speaker, which is then followed by a personal description of his own actions or thoughts. In the first stanza, however, he gives a description of what he imagines the scene and actions of the housewife "in negligee behind / the wooden walls of her husband's house" to be as he drives past "solitary". The position of "behind" at the end of the second line foregrounds the word and forces a double meaning on it. At first it appears to be used as a noun, referring to the neglected 'behind' of the woman, only to be suddenly revealed to be a preposition.

The following stanza presents a rendering of the scene outside this house as perceived by the speaker. The picture is made immediately perceptible to the reader as the housewife is described in her self-conscious appearance as she stands "shy, uncorseted, tucking in / stray ends of hair". Then, in the middle of the line the speaker introduces his perception of this woman as he compares her "to a fallen leaf".

The final stanza is juxtaposed with these lines as the scene described suddenly shifts to the passing car, rushing "with a crackling sound over / dried leaves". This juxtaposition brings out the force of the image (that is made up of the metaphor of the leaf) in revealing the effect that the prying eyes of the speaker have on the 'exposed' woman. The final personal description of his actions, "I bow and pass smiling", indicates his realization that life goes on after his fantasy.

What is evident throughout the poem is the distance between the speaker and the housewife. Whatever is described points towards the fact that it is based on the subjective perception of the speaker. The scene that is rendered is thus not very concrete but is still predominantly imagist in the juxtaposition as well as in the direct presentation of the image.

'Winter Quiet' (CEP:141) seems even less subjective (although it does turn out to be implicitly so) with no personal pronouns and only the one deictic "it" in line 5. Direct authorial presence is also absent from the poem as the winter landscape is presented with highly descriptive words, although mostly by means of the figurative language of personification. This form of metaphor is particularly suitable in creating an image in that

it presents what Juhasz (1974:14) terms "the complexities inherent in an instant of perception", of the experience of winter¹³.

In true imagist fashion the poem employs the metaphors (or personifications) of the three stanzas to create one image of winter. According to Juhasz (1974:46), metaphor in this poem "creates a vision of all of nature engaged in human copulation", contributing to the rendering of the complexities of the moment of perception.

In the first stanza the description of the mist presents a scene that is perhaps more clear than hard due to the highly figurative language of the poem. The picture of the mist lying "upon the back yards / among the outhouses" also has an abstract sexual implication signalled by the first line, "Limb to limb, mouth to mouth". This enjambed line creates an image which foregrounds the unlikely comparison.

The second stanza elaborates on the appearance of the mist in the rendering of "The dwarf trees" that "pirouette awkwardly to it-" as well as in the description of the big tree which "smiles and glances upward!" as if at the foolish play of the small trees among the dense mist. The final personification of the watching fences in the third stanza completes the imagist picture.

The poem is nonetheless something of an exception in this book, according to Walker (1984:136). This is mainly due to the extravagance of the metaphors and the personification which render the presentation highly subjective in spite of the absence of a "clearly dramatized speaker".

The language is consequently less natural and relaxed than in previous poems. Also the rhythm is less imagist, although it is still closer to musical phrase than to metronome. Unlike many of the other poems in **Al Que Quiere!**, the line-flow of this poem mostly honours expectations. Only line 2 has a doubtful enjambment, and even here it can be argued that the line forms part of the flowing sense-unit of the stanza. This

¹³ In commenting on the views held by Juhasz, Walker (1984:129) states that metaphor, ... is, in fact, far less common in [Williams'] poems than imaginative resemblance that is *implied* by association and juxtaposition.

nearly consistent flow further emphasizes the appearance of the mist on the winter landscape.

The poem would thus seem to be somewhat less imagist than many of the poems in this book although it does contain a number of distinctly imagist characteristics. The vivid nature of the image certainly accounts for most of this and even overshadows most of the implicitly subjective elements of the poem.

'Good Night' (CEP:145-146) is on many counts diametrically opposed to 'Winter Quiet'. Not only is it a lengthier poem and not only does it contain little figurative language, but the authorial presence is again explicitly prominent. The poem also contains a number of personal pronouns as well as subjective explications. Nevertheless, the concrete nature of the presentation (even more so than in the previous poem), as well as the absence of deictic devices gives the poem an imagist ring.

A sense of immediacy pervades the poem as an experience is presented in the first, second, and final stanzas, linked with the memory evoked by this experience in the third and fourth stanzas. It is also immediately evident that some structure has been brought into the presentation in the typographical qualities accompanying the use of distinct stanzas, as well as in the frame enclosing the two stanzas dealing with the memory.

The first four lines of the first stanza set the scene for the wandering thoughts of the speaker:

In brilliant gas light
I turn the kitchen spigot
and watch the water splash
into the green sink.

After this initial sense unit, the rendering of the scene continues as the speaker takes in the surroundings of the spigot.

The rest of the stanza as well as the next stanza up to the first line of the third stanza shows the lighting of his wandering eyes, firstly on the immediate surroundings (the "drain-board" and the "glass filled with

parsley -"14) before briefly returning to the water, then on the floor and the sandals "under the wall-table", and then again focusing on the glass in his hand. The unpredictable line-flow and the varying line-lengths contribute to creating a rhythm that is certainly closer to Pound's notion of the musical phrase than to the metronome, and that enhances the drifting of the speaker's eyes.

The use of "Waiting" as first word in both the second and third stanzas (right-indented in stanza 2 for further emphasis), as well as the final line of the second stanza, "all is in order for the night", again prepares the ground for the straying thoughts of the speaker as the sound of the rushing water and the rubber sandals evoke a scene from memory:

- three girls in crimson satin
 pass close before me on
 the murmurous background of
 the crowded opera -

it is

memory playing the clown -
 three vague, meaningless girls
 full of smells and
 the rustling sounds of
 cloth rubbing on cloth and
 little slippers on carpet -
 high-school French
 spoken in a loud voice!

The intensity of this description renders the complexity of experience (made even more so by the connotation with the preceding action) immediately perceptible as the senses contribute to an evocative presentation.

The first line of the fourth stanza is, however, superfluous, diminishing the direct rendering of the experience by explicating the scene. This is also the case with "brings me back" in the final stanza which lessens the effect of the sudden return of the thoughts to the water.

14 According to Miller (1966:306), the objective presence of the parsley indicates that "the parsley and the poem about the parsley are separate things, each existing within the universal realm made of the poet's coextension with the world". The poet is thus not intimidated by the presence of the parsley or any other object and it is not transposed "into the poem".

The fragmentation of the scene by means of the various shifts in focus as well as the meandering of his memories results in a strongly cubist character. These qualities also cause the immediacy of the rendering of the experience to be reduced. However, the effect created remains exceptionally concentrated and portrays the instant of perception sufficiently (specifically with consideration of the simplicity of the language and the new rhythm) for the poem to be largely imagist.

In the 1916 poem 'Danse Russe' (CEP:148), these elements are somewhat overshadowed by the cubist planes and subjective referring to the speaker. There are, however, a number of correspondences with the style of 'Good Night', specifically in the interaction between words and rhythm.

According to Guimond (1986:33), the poem is "a good example of Williams' free but governed style of poetry". With several discreet patterns foregrounding the poem's 'music', the words are caused to exist in their own right.

Williams' concern with the defamiliarization of words, to reveal their status as objects and not tools, is an intrinsic part of his poetry which is sustained in **Sour Grapes**, as is his concern with immediacy of experience.

3.2 SOUR GRAPES (1921)

Williams, according to MacGowan (1984:79), started a move towards the local in **Al Que Quiere!** which intensified in **Sour Grapes** (previously entitled **Picture Poems**¹⁵) with the exodus of artists to Europe around 1920. The title of the book reflects something of Williams' sombre mood amid this evacuation although many of the poems portray a more positive attitude; it can indeed be misleading "if it is applied to the focus of the poems rather than the impetus behind them" (Doyle,1982:24).

¹⁵ This working title, according to Doyle (1982:24), "accurately attests to Williams's continuing imagism".

Guimond (1968:93) states that, although "he remained true to the basic tenets of Imagism throughout his career, Williams grew dissatisfied with the limitations of the movement early in the 1920's". In **Sour Grapes** this is less evident than in **Spring and All**, with many of the poems still being essentially imagist and with less attention paid to conventional structure than to direct presentation of immediate experience. It would rather seem that the imagist characteristics in Williams work become much more mature and thus also more forceful in this book, a book in which he "presents himself more objectively and asserts himself more discreetly" (Guimond, 1968:34). The objectivity of his objectivist work is consequently already foreshadowed in some of the poems.

Placed between **Kora in Hell** and **Spring and All**, **Sour Grapes** "seems something of a transitional work, with nothing especially to show in the way of new technical discoveries" (Doyle, 1982:24). The style of many of the poems is still predominantly imagist with mostly the treatment of the poetic subjects indicating a shift in attitude.

Regarding rhythm, the poems in this book, according to Mayhew (1983:291), more frequently contain "jarring enjambments" in which "the definite article is separated from the noun and the preposition from its object", than those of **Al Que Quiere!**. This certainly renders the rhythm of the poems broken and 'new', and thus imagist, but also cubist.

'To Waken an Old Lady' (CEP:200) is, as is the case in many of the poems in this book, much less conventionally structured (specifically in the absence of stanzas) than many of the poems in the previous book. The poem is also more clearly imagist in appearance in its brevity and in consisting of lines of varying length which enhance and foreground the new rhythm as well as the descriptive words.

Doyle (1982:26) accordingly states that this is a "typical Williams Imagist poem" once on course, but that the opening line "endows it with somewhat different character":

Old age is
a flight of small
cheeping birds
skimming
bare trees
above a snow glaze.

The metaphor or analogy with which the poem commences creates a clear image that is presented concretely and visually in a hard and precise manner in the rest of the poem as the words are constantly foregrounded by means of unconventional line-endings and isolation. The lines are clearly not confined to sense-units, their fleeting nature forcing a broken rhythm on the reader which accentuates the picture of the almost insignificant birds (skimming) above the winter landscape.

Guimond (1968:35) states that the omission of 'like' at the end of the first line makes it objective. Although this statement has some value, the subjectivity involved in the construction of the analogy to my mind makes it somewhat less objective. Doyle (1982:26) is consequently of the opinion that this procedure is "different from the customary Williams, not because his is an entirely 'unmediated vision'..., but usually he presents his material 'objectively' before exploiting it metaphorically"¹⁶.

The use of "is" at the end of this enjambed first line accentuates the unusual metaphor for old age presented in this first part as the line flows to reveal that old age, which is not usually associated with speed and activity, is "a flight of small / cheeping birds". The image created by this metaphor is extended in the following lines as the vulnerability of the birds, manipulated by the wind, is pointed out.

The question in line 10 signals the introduction of the juxtaposition of the final lines in which the endurance of the seemingly helpless birds is revealed as the flock comes to rest "On harsh weedstalks" in the fierce surroundings, tempering the wind "by the shrill / piping of plenty". This juxtaposition also contributes towards creating a concrete and visual image in which the complexity of the experience of old age is demonstrated with imagist immediacy and precision.

The juxtaposition and "edges" of 'Approach of Winter' (CEP:197) also indicate some influence of cubism while retaining the imagist concern with hardness and the presentation of one central image with immediacy. This

¹⁶ This is not to disregard the fact that much the same effect is created in such poems as for example both the 'Pastoral' poems in *Al Que Quiere!*, *The Widow's Lament in Springtime* in this book, and *'The Red Wheelbarrow'* in *Spring and All*.

image of advancing winter is intensified by the juxtaposition of two major aspects of the scene.

The first five lines deal primarily with the tree and the stubborn leaves as part of it, in spite of the assault of the wind. The final six lines, introduced by the contrasting "or" in line six, focus on the scene of falling leaves driven before the wind, becoming part of the air and ground surrounding the tree. The tension inherent in this juxtaposition foregrounds the struggle of the leaves against the approaching months of cold, and serves to create an image of the energy which is part of the turn of the seasons.

According to MacGowan (1984:84), the poems in this book (such as 'Approach of Winter') "abound with various images of stilted movement" with many of the poems being patterned around the "explicit image of the impact of wind upon the landscape". He also states that the appearance of the landscape freezes the moment of impact. The effect of this arresting of the image is certainly imagist in immediacy.

The image is further strengthened by the descriptive words and the hardness and clarity resulting from it:

The half-stripped trees
 struck by a wind together,
 bending all,
 the leaves flutter drily
 and refuse to let go
 or driven like hail
 stream bitterly out to one side
 and fall
 where the salvias, hard carmine, -
 like no leaf that ever was -
 edge the bare garden.

In the first five lines words such as "half-stripped", "struck... together", "bending", and "flutter" create an atmosphere of tension and hardness which is underscored by the halty rhythm enhanced by the continual interruption of line-flow and the unpredictability of the enjambments.

The hardness continues in the final six lines with "bitterly", "hard carmine", and "edge", but is now combined with a sense of frantic

movement created by the use of words such as "driven", "stream", and "fall", as well as with a sense of stasis surrounding the use of "edge" as a verb. The kinetic energy is enhanced by the rhythm and line-flow; the enjambments of lines seven and eight quickening the tempo in lines six to nine.

The imagist nature of the poem is again emphasised by the change in rhythm of the next lines as the tempo is temporarily checked by the contrasting length of line eight and then slowed down by the comma in line nine and the dashes at the ends of lines nine and ten. The sense of stasis resulting from this serves as a juxtaposition with the tension of the first lines and the movement of lines six to nine. This juxtaposition assists in the presentation of the image of the contrast inherent in the scene.

The visual and concrete nature of the presentation of the scene indicates the dominance of the imagist mode in the poem and overshadows the cubist characteristics present in the tension and levels of activity. The influence of cubism on the poem is, however, evident, and contributes to a more structured product that can be seen to be a deviation from Imagism even though it is still essentially imagist¹⁷.

In 'Winter Trees' (CEP:201), a poem very similar to 'Approach of Winter' in topic, Williams again employs a subjective and interpretive frame for an imagist centre. Although the poem shows some structure, the presentation of the image in lines four to six, "A liquid moon / moves gently among / the long branches", is overshadowed by the explicative nature of the rest of the poem.

The exclamation of the first three lines and the deictic "their" in line seven specifically diminish the power of the image. This is enhanced by the personification in the final two lines where the "wise trees" are described as standing "sleeping in the cold".

17

This imagism again refers to Williams' inherent adherence to characteristics that is essentially imagist although their application is increasingly personalised with the introduction of cubist elements.

Williams' diversity in the previous two poems is accentuated in the following poem where the title, being longer than the poem itself, acquires a new significance:

To Be Closely Written On A Small Piece
Of Paper Which Folded Into A
Tight Lozenge Will Fit
Any Girl's Locket

(CEP:203)

The title prepares the reader for a brief and general love poem, being meant for "Any Girl's Locket". The typography also indicates the brevity of the poem in tapering down to the last line, and is thus more actively part of the poem than in most of the other poems.

The poem itself displays a number of distinctly imagist characteristics such as simple language and subject matter, clear and hard presentation, and immediacy, concentrated into three lines:

Lo the leaves
Upon the new autumn grass -
Look at them well!

The deictic "them" in the final line does not create an overly personalised atmosphere, specifically due to the brevity of the poem, and is in this instance overshadowed by the direct and clear presentation of the image. The exclamation mark also fails to impair the concreteness of the poem in not explicating but merely expressing the intense emotion of the moment.

The poem, specifically its structure and brevity, does, however, remind of the Japanese *haiku* (a style with remarkably much in common with imagism). Although the syllable-count does not exactly match the 5/7/5 or 5/6/6 of the *haiku* (being 3/7/4), there are a number of similarities.

As in the *haiku*, this poem deals with simplicity and the importance of simple things: "leaves / Upon the new autumn grass". The concern with the spirit of beauty (evident in the final line) instead of beauty itself, as well as the implication that the reader must become co-creator, is also

haiku in character, as is the presence of sentimental (but not emotional) undertones.

It is not at this stage important to determine whether Williams was indeed influenced by the *haiku*¹⁸. In fact, he does not use this form often enough to warrant any definite correlation. The fact that the characteristics that are present in this poem can mostly be interpreted as being imagist also, rather points to an inherent adherence to the style of concrete and visual poetry with attention to simple things presented in a simple manner.

The structure of the poem also suggests Williams' move away from the "loose" Imagist poem, while the seeming contradiction in line two of "new" and "autumn" acknowledges its influence. It can, however, still be viewed as being part of his personal brand of imagism which would seem to incorporate elements of cubism and possibly even of *haiku*.

The two-line poems, 'Spring' (CEP:205) and 'Lines' (CEP:206), share many of the elements of the previous poem and might also be viewed as deriving from *haiku*, even though they deviate even further from its traditional structure.

In all three these poems contrasting concepts are placed next to each other and are used to intensify an image. In 'Spring' the "grey hairs" of old age are compared to the "plum blossoms" of spring and in 'Lines' "grey green" leaves as part of life are juxtaposed with broken glass, described as being "bright green".

Whereas 'Spring' is more imagist in the presentation of the image of old age, 'Lines' is distinctly cubist in the use of different levels of colour.

18 Williams might have been introduced to the *haiku* by Pound, who was influenced greatly by this style and whose 'In a Station of the Metro' was, according to Pratt (1964:15), specifically modeled on this form. It is also possible that he might merely have followed the example of Imagist poets such as Hulme, Flint, and Pound who were, according to Feder (1991:313), drawn to the *haiku* "which they viewed as a form of verse libre, the purest example of the principles of Imagism". Feder further states that Pound's study and imitation of this form determined his "definition of an image as 'that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time'".

Both of them are, however, similar to the *haiku* in simplicity and immediacy as well as in being direct.

'Epitaph' (CEP:212) lacks the immediacy of the previous two poems and the simplicity of the presentation is also marred by highly figurative language. In the first stanza the animation of "An old willow with hollow branches", presented in the tone of a narration, creates a distance from the scene which is increased by the 'grammatical deixis' induced by the use of the past tense:

An old willow with hollow branches
slowly swayed his few high bright tendrils
and sang:

The concentration of adjectives nonetheless renders the language intensely descriptive, giving it an imagist ring.

The metaphor in the second stanza also diminishes the immediacy in that it diverts attention from the scene of the willow and focuses on love: "Love is a young green willow / shimmering at the bare wood's edge". This results in the metaphor not quite becoming an image as the reader is not primarily presented with a rendering of a sense experience.

The poem would thus not be a prime example of imagism although it does contain a number of imagist elements such as highly descriptive language as well as brevity¹⁹. The secondary focus on nature also seems to dissolve any real resemblance with the *haiku*. The poem is certainly rather atypical and difficult to situate within Williams' development.

More characteristic of Williams' work in *Sour Grapes*, 'The Birds' (CEP:218) again deals with immediate perception of a scene in nature:

The world begins again!
Not wholly insufflated
the blackbirds in the rain
upon the dead topbranches

19 The sound patterns of the poem, which form an "exquisite auditory harmony" (Miller, 1966:319), also indicate a new (imagist) rhythm attaining consonance without being traditional. Miller also states that criticism "can only in lumbering awkwardness catch and analyze these evanescent melodies".

of the living tree,
 stuck fast to the low clouds,
 notate the dawn.
 Their shrill cries sound
 announcing appetite
 and drop among the bending roses
 and the dripping grass.

The exclamation mark at the end of the first line expresses a moment of awed silence in which the poet refrains from verbalising the sensory experience. Indeed, according to Guimond (1968:35), Williams often uses exclamation marks or phrases in *Sour Grapes* to "express the emotional power of his subjects". He also states that this use corresponds closely to the *kana*, a Japanese particle used in *haiku* poems to express feelings of admiration, joy, or sorrow.

After this initial expression, the poem proceeds in an extremely imagist presentation of the image of blackbirds in the dawn landscape. The scene is recreated with both hardness and immediacy as its various sensory aspects are evoked for the reader. The sense of immediacy is enhanced by the position of the verb ("notate") near the end of the second sentence in line seven, which gives the effect of instantaneous perception or experience.

The image is strengthened by the almost too obvious contrast of the "dead topbranches" and the "living tree" in lines four and five, and also by the juxtaposition of the positions of the "topbranches" and the "low clouds" in which the branches are "stuck fast". The birds are positioned at this point where the high of the low and the low of the high meet, indicating also their position as 'notators' of the dawn (which is of course where night and morning meet).

The imagism of the poem is also evident in the halty rhythm which results from the extended pause at the end of the first line and also the false enjambments of line two (which is followed by three flowing lines before the next pause), and lines eight and nine where the omission of commas forces the reader to read attentively and "regroup" continuously.

Even the deictic "their" in line eight at the beginning of the final sentence does not diminish the imagist force of this poem in which the image is presented concretely and with simplicity.

A somewhat more elaborate and less concrete presentation, 'The Thinker' (CEP:220) is equally imagist in the treatment of a single image as well as in the focus on and defamiliarization of an everyday scene. In a certain sense the poem also indicates Williams' move away from the loose imagist style of his earlier work towards a more structured whole (as is also the case in for example 'The Great Figure' [CEP:230]).

The poem is vaguely similar to the sonnet form and consists largely of two-line units that can be divided into two groups. The first eight lines contain four couplets in the form of four sentences, each being a complete statement:

My wife's new pink slippers
 have gay pompons.
 There is not a spot or a stain
 on their satin toes or their sides.
 All night they lie together
 under her bed's edge.
 Shivering I catch sight of them
 and smile, in the morning.

Within these units a structure emerges in the construction of first the external properties of the scene, and then its effect on the speaker as he smiles at the sight of the slippers.

The six subsequent lines comprise three two-line units which form one sentence and also one sense-unit. In this part of the poem the slippers are animated in the developing of the image and the focus is essentially on their 'activities'. Again the speaker draws attention to himself as observer and their effect on him is again implied by the exclamation mark at the end of the unit, used in the manner of the *haiku*.

The final three lines form another flowing unit in which the effect of the scene is finally revealed, thus concluding the image:

And I talk to them
 in my secret mind
 out of happiness.

Only in this part of the poem does the image mature as an experience of homely joy when the speaker for the first time 'communicates' with the slippers. The almost consistently flowing two-line 'beat' of the rest of the poem (except for line eight) is disturbed in these lines, causing the poem to acquire something of the imagist rhythm of the previous poem.

What renders the poem imagist, however, is rather the use of a central image in which both the inner and external characteristics of the scene are presented, than the slightly inconsistent rhythm. Although the poem is essentially imagist, it would seem that its highly structured presentation hints (even at this early stage) at Williams' development towards the more structured synthetic cubism, but specifically also objectivism.

'Spouts' (CEP:222) again shows the diversity of Williams' imagist style as the image of the fountain is presented in one uninterrupted sentence stretching over 14 lines. Unlike 'The Thinker', the poem has practically no set pattern or conventional structure and its imagism depends largely on hardness and irregular rhythm.

The presentation of the image is effected in a number of foregrounding devices, not least of which are the three introductory lines in which the reader is misguided as to the content of the rest of the poem: "In this world of / as fine a pair of breasts / as ever I saw"²⁰.

After a complete change of direction in the ensuing lines, the metaphor of the action of the fountain (as a white tree) is also foregrounded in the change of word order:

the fountain in
Madison Square
spouts up of water
a white tree
that dies and lives

Also the unusual order of "dies and lives" serves as defamiliarization and makes the reader intent on the interminable cycle of water in the fountain.

²⁰ According to MacGowan (1984:87), the poem specifically uses the image "to suggest the fundamental rhythms of nature".

The rest of this vivid picture is presented with great concentration as each minute detail of the movement of the water is created:

as the rocking water
 in the basin
 turns from the stonerim
 back upon the jet
 and rising there
 reflectively drops down again.

The imagist hardness of the presentation is evident in the use of exact words as each of the final six lines serves as a sense unit providing another element of the scene. This also enhances the irregular rhythm in that each line has to be read both as separate unit and in relation to the other lines.

Although the rhythm of this poem is certainly imagist, it differs largely from that of most of Williams' other imagist poems due to its flowing nature. Instead of relying on line endings and false enjambments, the halty rhythm of this poem is induced by varying degrees of flow, the change of word order, and varying line lengths.

The rapidity of the flow in the first seven lines is stemmed somewhat in the rest of the poem although it still continues. This can be ascribed to the positioning of words at line ends, such as the prepositions "of" in line one and "in" in line four which force an immediate continuation, and also "I saw" in line three which clearly links up with both the breasts in the preceding line and the fountain in the next. The change of word order in lines six and seven also forces swift flow since "a white tree" fits into the previous line before "of water".

This reversal of order and also that of "dies and lives" in the next line, aside from disturbing the rhythm, also signals the slight change of pace in the rest of the poem. In these lines, although the enjambment still induces flow, the separate existence of each line as sense unit as well as the positioning of linking words such as "that", "as", "in", and "and" at the beginning of lines forces a slower pace.

Although the poem is clearly imagist in these elements, its force presides primarily in the clarity of presentation of the image as well as in its

hardness and economy. In this the lack of punctuation plays an important role in creating the immediacy of the scene.

The image in 'The Nightingales' (CEP:224) is presented with equal immediacy and economy but again highly structured as in 'The Thinker' (CEP:220). The poem consists of two four-line stanzas²¹, each being one sentence, in which the simplicity of the single experience is rendered with a hardness that accentuates the destructive qualities of the scene.

The pertinent visual structure of the poem does not, however, mean that its sound is of less import. According to Perloff (1983:162), "the words must be perceived in time as our eye moves from line to line; just as clearly, the visual arrangement foregrounds certain sounds" such as the voiced 's' in much of the poem as well as the three nasals in the first quatrain. The primary visual quality nonetheless predominates to lend to the poem a distinctly concrete character.

The first stanza focuses downwards from the picture of the speaker leaning over his shoes to the flowers on which the shoes stand destructively. In the second stanza the focus is again brought down from the fingers of the speaker to the "shoes and flowers", thus accentuating the image and implying the importance of the "flat worsted flowers" in the scene.

The image is further foregrounded by the title which has no direct bearing on the content, making the reader intently aware of the destructive action of the speaker, even more so due to the fact that the shoes are unlaced (again foregrounded by the repetition of "unlacing" and its isolation in line seven).

The rhythm of the poem is rendered irregular by the false enjambments at the end of the second line of each stanza, but the overall effect is rather one of structure amid a feeling of immediacy.

²¹ Perloff (1983:159-160) draws attention to Williams' removing of the fifth line of the original version of the poem ("under my feet") to make it 'look better' on the page, and further points out that the resulting symmetrical form of the two quatrains "provides stability against which the words of the little poem push and jostle".

In the final poem of this book, 'The Great Figure' (CEP:230), this immediacy acquires animated intensity in the presentation of an event²². This complexly structured poem introduces the sensory elements of the scene with such rapid succession that its perception becomes virtually involuntary:

Among the rain
and lights
I saw the figure 5
in gold
on a red
firetruck
moving
tense
unheeded
to gong clangs
siren howls
and wheels rumbling
through the dark city.

The figure 5 is frozen for an instant, "seize[d] in motion and fix[ed] ...in words as a perpetual gesture" (Miller, 1966:348).

The poem is made up of 4 major parts, the first three respectively dealing with the visual, kinetic, and aural qualities of the scene and the final part bringing them together in a sharp focus.

The first part, consisting of the first 6 lines of the 13 of the poem, introduces the image visually, thus revealing the importance of the perception of "the figure 5". This figure leaps out at the reader from the hazy surroundings of "the rain / and lights" independently, before being located on the firetruck.

In the next three lines, immediately after this identification, the kinetic quality of the image is revealed. The speed of the truck is foregrounded by the fleeting rhythm resulting from the isolation of the three words comprising the lines. The momentum of these lines is carried over to the

22 Macgowan (1984:91-93) gives a detailed discussion of the genesis and development of the poem in its relation to the work of J.P. Hartley, also accentuating Williams' (and Hartley's) "strategy of capturing the 'immediate'".

next line which begins with "to", indicating the relation of the sound (rendered in the next two lines) to the motion.

The final part concentrates the image with the description of "wheels rumbling / through the dark city" which links up with the sounds of the previous lines as well as with the motion described in the second part and the visual description in the first (i.e. in reverse order). This has the effect of progressively presenting the disappearance of the truck into the darkness.

Although the image is presented as clear and hard as can possibly be done, the intersecting levels or planes of visual, kinetic and aural elements in a kinaesthetic presentation indicate a clear link with cubism, showing that the basis of imagism remains with Williams in the influences of the other movements. The effect of these elements on the poem might be what leads Doyle (1982:27) to state that (in spite of the fact that it is Williams' "most baldly direct rendering of the object") the poem "lacks the reverberation which so often makes his Imagist poems more than the mere standard products of its kind".

It would thus seem that Williams increasingly opts for structure and diversity in this book, a tendency in his work that grows in **Spring and All** in an even clearer foreshadowing of his objectivist work.

3.3 SPRING AND ALL (1923)

Although **Spring and All**²³ is regarded by Webster Schott (1970:86) as the book in which Williams "once and for all abandoned the imagism ... of his three first books of poems", traces of imagism are still present in many of the poems. The tendency in the book is, however, towards a more consistently structured approach²⁴ (specifically in the use of stanzas

²³ Since this study does not deal primarily with the contents (but rather the characteristics) of the poetry, only the poems in **Spring and All** will be analyzed (although the prose parts of the book will be kept in mind wherever it has direct bearing). The views of Doyle (1982:30-31) are notable in this regard as he considers the merit of the study of the poems in the book without the prose parts, concluding that "while the best poems of **Spring and All** offer themselves 'free from interpretation' the book as a whole invites it".

and repetition) that can be linked with both synthetic cubism and objectivism. His individual style also becomes increasingly evident in this book.

According to Guimond (1968:44), the poems in this book are marked by a "cold precision and nervous speed" in which as few periods as possible are used and in which the syntax is kept minimal. Williams also makes less use of capital letters and often ends a poem without a full stop. The qualities arising from this are, however, more structured and more immediate than in previous poems.

The increased impersonality of the poems in **Spring and All** that accompanies the increased immediacy does not, according to Walker (1984:126), render them more self-denying. He states that they are, "sometimes explicitly ('so much depends'; ...) and always implicitly - through the details of their composition and arrangement - ... evidence of an imaginative self confronting the world". This would suggest that the impersonality of the poems is evident in the way they communicate, and not in what they communicate, which results in poetry that is at once personal and impersonal²⁵.

The title poem of the book, poem I or 'Spring and All' (CEP:241), is an excellent example of Williams' combining of the elements of a number of styles. According to Doyle (1982:29), "by paying naked attention to the details of the landscape the poet has arrived, slowly and painfully, at definition". It is at once completely different from his early imagist poems, notably imagist in the presentation of the image of spring, and significantly cubist in the use of levels and fragmentation.

The title already hints at a fragmented presentation. It might indicate the novelty of the poem's approach to the season (as well as of the presentation of the book with its intermingling of poetry and prose²⁶) in

²⁴ MacGowan (1984:129-135) indicates the intricate structure of the book with its 27 poems that are arranged in a number of patterns that can for example be viewed in separate groups of poems, but also as outgrowth of the "immediately surrounding prose discussion" (1984:131).

²⁵ In the same way Williams achieves this "doubleness" by focusing on "the experience evoked in the poem rather than on an individual experiencing it" (Walker, 1984:127).

suggesting that spring will not be the sole subject of presentation, nor will its 'romantic' or pleasant side; that the poem (and book) will deal with all aspects of spring and life. It might also reveal an offhand approach in which no preconceived ideas of spring and life will be of value.

The narrative tone of lines one to four is not quite imagist in not giving a hard and precise presentation of the scene, rather resembling prose. In line four this tone is broken by the introduction of the isolated "- a cold wind", before the next sentence, starting in mid-line, carries on in the same conversational manner for the rest of the stanza.

The final line of this stanza together with the subsequent couplet presents the first imagist section. In this 'interval' the pre-spring scene is created both concretely and visually through the juxtaposition of "standing" and "fallen" in line six, and the "patches of standing water" and "scattering of tall trees" in lines seven and eight. The scene is also presented with a hardness that enhances the content.

This is also true of much of the third stanza with the "... reddish / purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy / stuff of bushes and small trees / with dead, brown leaves under them...", the torrent of adjectives imitating the scene beside the road²⁷. Again each word stands on its own, as a thing in itself; "in the stately slowness of Williams' cadence things and words retain their integrity" (Miller, 1966:298).

In spite of a number of these imagist sections in the poem the image presented seems to lack the direct nature and immediacy of Williams' earlier work. The cubist elements (including the juxtaposition of imagist instances as part of the fragmentation) render the imagism of the poem somewhat secondary in the overall presentation, assigning it the role of colouring the picture (the poem will be discussed in terms of cubism in the next chapter).

26 The random prose interruptions of the 27 poems, according to Mazzaro (1974:20), are concerned with novelty during the first nine poems; "during the second nine poems, copying and imitation; and during the final nine poems, the differences between poetry and prose".

27 This stream of descriptive words has another inherent function for the poet, namely that, as in other poems about the birth of form, Williams tries "to maintain for as long as possible the moment when new life appears from the ground" (Miller, 1966:354-5).

The imagist instances in poem III, 'The Farmer' (CEP:236), have much the same appearance. The main factor preventing these instances from acquiring a more active role in the poem, however, is the explicative character of the rest of the poem. Unlike the subjective frame used in earlier poems such as the two "Pastoral" poems in **Al Qui Quiere!** to highlight the image, this frame encompasses and overwhelms the imagist centre with its interpretation of the scene. The narrative tone of 'Spring and All' has much the same effect.

An interesting inversion takes place in poem VIII, 'At the Faucet of June' (CEP:251), where an imagist frame is used without acquiring the significance of the interpretive frame of the previous poem. In this instance the frame, "The sunlight in a / yellow plaque upon the / varnished floor.... ..., a / partridge / from dry leaves", functions more as brackets (as happens in the two 'Pastoral' poems referred to), binding together the fragmentary cubist contents. The poem is also "a typical instance of Williams's use of the apparently irrelevant, or his sense that all things are relevant" (Doyle,1982:33).

The imagism inherent in the presentation of poem XI, 'The Right of Way' (CEP:259), is also transformed by a number of elements from other styles. Apart from the fact that the immediacy of the scene is impaired by the use of the past tense as in 'Epitaph' (CEP:212) from **Sour Grapes**, the poem is also prominently structured, consisting only of couplets.

These short stanzas, together with the use of dashes (as only punctuation in the poem) to indicate sense units, result in a rugged rhythm that is nonetheless evident and that shows a significant deviation from the disruptive rhythm of the imagist poems of the previous books. The narrative tone in the first three stanzas, and also in stanzas 10 to 13, seems to enhance this effect in being similar to the use in 'Spring and All'.

The imagist sections of this poem do, however, achieve a level of concreteness and visuality that outweighs the deviations. After "I saw" in line six, the experience of the speaker is rendered with descriptive and simple language together with the juxtaposition of three main points of focus that enhance the image:

an elderly man who
smiled and looked away

to the north past a house -
a woman in blue

who was laughing and
leaning forward to look up

into the man's half
averted face

and a boy of eight who was
looking at the middle of

the man's belly
at a watchchain -

The eyes of the speaker link the three figures by means of a rendering that resembles a sweeping gaze, adeptly making the man the focus point of the scene with both the woman and the boy (and of course the speaker himself) looking at him. The converging lines of vision do point to cubism, but the clear, hard, and precise presentation indicates a predominantly imagist approach in these six central stanzas in which a wide scene is concentrated into one image.

Although the scene is presented in the past tense, the fact that it is clearly a vivid memory retains the immediacy of the experience in its rendering. The final stanza, after another four personalized stanzas, seems to accentuate this with a final little 'snapshot' concluding the experience: "I saw a girl with one leg / over the rail of a balcony"²⁸. It is, however, not wholly concluded in that the poem ends without any punctuation mark, leaving the experience hanging and also reinforcing the sense of immediacy or instantaneous perception.

The poem would therefore seem to indicate Williams' development towards a personalised style (already initiated in poems such as 'Pastoral' from *Al Qui Quiere!*, although more fully incorporated here) in which imagist scenes are merged with more elaborate descriptive renderings of

28

In this poise of the girl, according to Miller (1966:345), "the richness of the universe [is] concentrated".

experience. This results in a presentation in which the imagist elements are less conspicuous without losing force.

According to MacGowan (1984:116), the poet's aloofness from the world around him "allows him to bring the 'structural imperatives' of a local scene together". This ability to synthesize is seldom more evident than in this poem. It also points towards one of the clearest distinctions between **Al Que Quiere!** and **Spring and All**, namely that between isolated elements of a scene and the scene as a whole²⁹.

Poem XVI, 'To an Old Jaundiced Woman' (CEP:268), has much the same position but again indicates Williams' diversity in yet another personalised incorporation of an imagist scene. The presentation of the scene in the first eleven lines of the poem is virtually the same as that of some of the earlier imagist poems. This time, however, the direct qualities of the image are thwarted by the repetition of the single "O" at the beginning of each of the first three stanzas (and sense units):

O tongue
licking
the sore on
her netherlip

O toppled belly

O passionate cotton
stuck with
matted hair

elsian slobber
upon
the folded handkerchief

These salutations (which are usually used in the sense of praise of elevated subjects or persons) not only serve to foreground the improbable subject matter, but also impair the direct rendering of the scene.

²⁹ Doyle (1982:34) also points out that the poem shows "how universal and relative are one and the same".

The final seven lines, in which the line "I can't die"³⁰ is repeated three times, are again presented in a narrative tone which provides explanation to an otherwise imagist scene, thus removing some of the immediacy of the event. As in the previous poem, however, the imagist picture prevails with its simplicity and hardness that is evident in both the diction and the broken rhythm.

The much anthologised and famous 'The Red Wheelbarrow' (CEP:277), or poem XXI, is again different from anything else in the book. Although the poem seems to be a striking example of imagism on a number of counts, the influences of other movements are undeniably present.

Apart from its prominent structure and almost consistent rhythm, the image of the wheelbarrow is introduced with a subjectivised statement that can be interpreted in a number of ways. Its ambivalence is also enhanced by the enjambment of the first line, "so much depends", with the line on its own having a general meaning which is completely different from the more specific meaning emerging in both lines together: "so much depends / upon".

According to Juhasz (1974:35), these two lines also function in such a way that the formally independent objects and components of the poem "are linked by the pressure of the imagination upon them". Another important suggestion of the phrase is the reason why so much depends upon the red wheelbarrow which, according to Miller (1966:310), is that this wheelbarrow, "occupying silently its small spot in time and space, contains everything"³¹. In a way the phrase also "asserts and takes for granted the absence of any agreed hierarchies" (Davie,1991:376).

30 These cries signify "the old woman's assertion of her individuality" (Doyle,1982:35), admired by Williams.

31 Both these elements inherent in the lines enhance the immediacy of the image. For this reason, the view of Mazzaro (1974:84) that, "ignoring the poet's description of the work's origin, many readers have made the poem a Stevensian exercise, connecting the meaning of its opening lines... to the poet or poem's objects rather than to the survival of Marshall and his family", misses the point on another level. While his statement is certainly true, it propagates an exclusively biographical reading of the poem that would rob it of many of its imaginative facets.

The rest of the poem is foregrounded by the first stanza as the expectations raised in these two problematic and universalised lines are upset in the three ensuing stanzas by the concentrated presentation of an everyday scene, further complicating matters:

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens.

The simplicity of the image created in these lines is contrasted with the extended statement preceding it, emphasising the importance of simple things in the here and now³². The lack of punctuation marks (except for the final full stop) and capital letters, together with the fact that what is so much depended on is not even something definite but an indefinite ("a") "red wheel / barrow", also serve to underscore this theme.

The imagism of the poem is evident in the presentation of the image which could hardly be clearer, harder, or more concrete. It can also be seen in the juxtaposition of the wheelbarrow and the chickens which intensifies the statement of the first stanza as the reader has to struggle to uncover the relation. This is further complicated by the general rendering of the wheelbarrow due to the use of the indefinite article, "a", and the more specific rendering induced by the definite article, "the", in relation to the chickens, even though the focus is primarily on the wheelbarrow. All of this serves to create an instantaneous image.

The structure of the poem is, however, quite unlike Williams' earlier imagist poems, its symmetry being much closer to objectivism with four two-line stanzas, each first line consisting of three words, and each second line of one two-syllable word (which also happens to be a noun in each case). The syllable-counts of the first lines are also symmetrical in a

³² According to Doyle (1982:37), the poem is also activated by two other verbal elements, "beside" (into which the poem's juxtapositional 'vividness' is concentrated), and "glazed" (which is a source of energy "given charge by the surrounding denotative opacity"), situated at the beginning of the second and third stanzas.

circular movement with the first and last stanzas containing four syllables each, and that of the two central lines three. The effect of this conspicuously structured presentation is a rhythm that is much more regular than in previous poems.

The rhythm is nonetheless still imagist in being new, and even halty. The enjambment of the first line of each stanza intensifies the reader's awareness of each word as he has to consider the next line both on its own and in relation to the previous line, thus consistently bringing the rhythm to a halt. This is also enhanced by the fact that each of the three final stanzas is a sense unit, which upsets the expectation of enjambment at the end of each stanza and produces a fragmented effect that can be related to cubism.

In spite of the distinct elements of both cubism and objectivism that can be detected in the poem, the concentration of the image of an everyday scene in simple language still renders the poem intensely imagist. Although it can thus not be regarded as a purely imagist poem, it is not entirely cubist or objectivist either. It would, however, be possible to view it as a predominantly imagist poem in which the influence of cubism can be detected and which clearly foreshadows Williams' objectivist regard for structure and the poem as object.

In the light of this, the statements of Guimond (1968:101) that Williams "rapidly progressed beyond the bare 'pure' Imagism of a poem like 'Red Wheelbarrow'" in the 1920's, and Stauffer (1974:345) that the poem is an "Imagist *aperçu*", would seem to be somewhat misguided in that they create the impression that the poem is 'conventionally' imagist. Such statements do not take the prominent influences of other movements on the poem into account.

The following poem in **Spring and All**, poem XXII or 'Quietness' (CEP:277), seems at first glance to be very similar to 'The Red Wheelbarrow'. It is equally brief, also consists of four two-lined stanzas, has no punctuation marks (except for the dash in line seven), and does not begin with a capital letter. It also commences with a rather general and indirect stanza, presenting neither a specific day nor a specific place or

person: "one day in Paradise / a Gypsy". The poem is, however, much less imagist than the previous one.

The force of the image is diminished by a number of elements, among which the distance between the reader and the scene is most prominent. In the first place the vague nature of the first stanza renders the presentation inaccessible to the reader as he or she has to deal with an uncharacteristic sense of fantasy which diminishes direct involvement. The use of the past tense also creates a sense of remoteness.

The presentation of the experience of the leaves in the final two stanzas reminds of the later poem, 'This is Just to Say' (CEP:354), and is rather subjective: "of the leaves - / so many // so lascivious / and still". The erotic qualities awarded to the leaves further enhance the atmosphere of fantasy in the poem, while it also disturbs the poem's objective image.

There are, however, some haunting yet evasive imagist undertones in the poem in specifically the *haiku*-like approach to nature and the vivid image of the leaves. Also the rhythm is distinctly imagist, being both halty and broken. The poem thus reveals the sustained influence of imagism on Williams even though the effect of the presentation is rather personalised.

It would thus seem that Williams' work in **Spring and All**, although it is much less consciously imagist than in the previous books, still contains enough imagist elements and influences to be regarded as imagist. There is, however, a clear shift towards the structure of objectivism and the diversity of cubism³³ with more and more predominantly cubist and objectivist poems as will be shown in the next two chapters.

Williams' basic concern with imagist principles does, however, remain an inherent part of his poetic style³⁴, with his view of the attributes of the true poem, according to Doyle (1982:173), being that it "recognizes the *uniqueness* of each thing or object in experience". Also his imagist view of the poet's task, namely that it is "to perceive this uniqueness with as

33 The increasing fragmentation of the rhythm by what Mayhew (1983:291) terms "jarring enjambments" already indicates this shift towards cubism.

34 Surman (1983:192) accordingly quotes K.L. Goodwin as characterizing Williams "as a 'spontaneous' Imagist".

great a clarity as possible and to render it as a poem with as much 'vividness' as he can command" remains part of his poetics throughout his career.

In this statement lies the key to Williams' 'visual' poetry. Although critics detect a number of visual elements in his poems (whether typographically or relating to content³⁵), the basic imagist role of 'vividness' and direct presentation is often overlooked as is the metrically enforcing role of visual elements.

Mayhew (1983:288) points out that the "distinctive appearance of the poem on the page" that results from Williams' practice of experimenting with the line, is often misinterpreted as making the line "an exclusively visual device". This view tends to take the look of the poem on the page for the cause or the whole. He further states that Williams' prosody is 'visual' only in the sense that the juxtaposition of two types of pauses (punctuation and structure of lines and stanzas) on the printed page "give a clear idea of the poet's metrical intentions" (1983:290).

These intentions are certainly not to be separated from the poet's striving towards the vivid and immediate rendering of a poem, an endeavour that is only intensified in Williams' cubist poems.

35 They include Marjorie Perloff in her **To Give a Design** (1983:159-186) in which the typographical visuality of Williams' poems are discussed, *Sayre's The Visual Text of William Carlos Williams* (1983), and Hollander's *The Poem in the Eye* (1972).