



# An Appraisal of the Usage of Images in the Select Poems of William Carlos Williams

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## Abstract

William Carlos Williams is the renowned American poet and he is widely known for his employment of images from the world of nature. A perceptible reader can enjoy the employment of figures of speech such as metaphor and simile. This study aims at an analysis of the select poems of William Carlos Williams such as "Paterson" and "Dawn" so as to bring out the efficient usage of images by him. He has adeptly employed the images the city and the sun respectively in the above said poems.

**Keywords:** Image, Imagination, Technique, Emotion and Subject.

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William Carlos Williams is an eminent poet employs numerous images effectively in his poetry. Being in medical profession, he is to compose poems and his interest is materialized with profuse supply of subjects from the society. He has revealed his emotion by using varied images. The real qualities of the subjects are whether magnified or subsided, his emotions and thoughts are highlighted. The readers are enlightened by the effective use of the poetic techniques by William Carlos Williams especially his images stand unique. They enrich the experience of the readers and take them to the realm of imagination from the bare reality of this world or vice versa. Theory of writing gets the paradigm shift in the history of English Literature when the writers get exhausted by their

own creative art whether it may be in poetry, fiction or drama. Excessive description leads to unnecessary labour of writing and reading. It needs to be simplified, provided that proper depth must be maintained. Hence, the literary writers in the twentieth century found the art of using concrete objects directly to reduce the practice of simile and metaphor. Both the literary devices are well employed in writing poetry, fiction and so on. They are like the instruments used for understanding the purpose at first. A work of art can be developed by comparisons and contrasts. A perceptible reader can enjoy the effective use of images in poetry and it is an important strategy employed by the writer. This paper aims at an analysis of the select poems of William Carlos Williams such as



“Paterson” and “Dawn,” so as to bring out his efficient employment of images, the city and the sun respectively in them.

The deviation of using the poetic devices widely and freely might have come into existence in the European Literature generally and English and American Literature particularly in writing poetry from the Romantic period as movements sprouted in various manifestations in literature thematically, choice of subjects and events. The shift of literature from top to bottom, from the life of human folly to the life of common folk supplies profusely the subjects and the objects. The manner of composing poems has undergone a change and the poets have started to speak more about the common folk. Breaking of the conventions of writing becomes boon for writers, harmoniously, they have begun their writings, fruitfully, and enjoyably for themselves and the society. Changes are permanent and the styles are temporary, events are numerous, emotions are the base and the permutation and combination of these two aspects become the sources of fine literature ever produced by the men of letters from time to time.

John Keats for example employs images throughout his poetry with the suffering imagery. He has used the months such as May, April, or June in association with the seasons. His descriptions of Winter is entirely different from other writers. For him, personally, the Winter is more devilish and demonlike. His sufferings from the disease consumption makes him in turn to consume poetry. In fact, his tuberculosis which invades his health as well his mind that too in young when romance is pervaded into his thought. More sad! When one could empathize John Keats and the great poet in him. John Keats has lived with the deadly disease and died due to it. In fact, the disease and the subsequent suffering have made him a poet of all times and he lives forever in the minds of people as a creative artist.

William Carlos Williams has the poetic inspiration from John Keats. He can become the poet mainly because of the

romantic poet. But he adheres the movement which is relevant to his own period, that is the imagist movement. Ezra Pound is the pathfinder of the movement. As for the literary contributions of Williams, John Keats and Ezra Pound are like his two eyes. The imagist movement has helped him in writing poems in alliance with his knowledge as painter. The precision he develops in painting comes to the fore while he is writing poems. He has the back up of poetic writing as well. He takes events of writing from his daily experiences. His medical profession supplies him so much of details to write poems. He does many experiments in the language especially in writing. He employs the poetic language conventionally at first, then changes into free verse for creating poetic effect as well as clarity for maximum extent.

The readers could understand him well by his employment of images, themes, techniques in tune with his physical illness, a chronic one, a kind of melancholic, but his works have the aesthetic sense. William Carlos Williams is appreciated along with John Keats in terms of poeticizing his experience with his faculty of mind which is more concerned with literature. Taking things or objects and attributing his own feelings on them in terms of sensualities, romance, a kind of thirstiness, and a gratification through his lines are the salient features of John Keats’ poetry. He inspires Williams more, and the latter takes the cue from the great master and improvises himself to be the bard of Rutherford or America. He gets himself cultivated from the Europe, England to the US literally or poetically, but stresses on his own nation, America. A kind of nationalism is also established through his poetic explorations. His poetic principle is “no ideas but in things.” He has the mastery of such writing, aestheticism, romantic aspects all indebted to John Keats, but, innovatively or authoritatively he erects a theory of writing which is contradictory to the romantic poet. When the readers take his later poetic work, “Paterson,” he describes his nearby city called Paterson, the river and the



Passaic falls. All are concrete things where he infuses sentiments and emotions, positively and portrays the city artistically. His choice of images is entirely different from other poets. Indeed, poems are the vivid descriptions of abstract matters like beauty in association with romance, pleasantness, truth in connection with philosophy, social satire, but Williams' are of America, nationalism, projecting them to the world.

He says in "Paterson:"

"A man like a city and a woman like a flower

--- who are in love. Two women. Three women.

Innumerable women, each like a flower,  
But

Only one man--- like a city." (36-40)

Flower is attributed to woman which is poetic generally, but it is the man with city is varied. Like it or not, everyone must accept the comparison of man and the city. The author's wish is predominantly poeticizing places of America to expose them to the world. It is more usual that man can be compared with animals like lion, horse, tiger with their physical power or strength. There is a personal motive behind Williams' exploration of the city with a man. It appears that the city is Paterson, the man is himself. For him, Art for Art Sake and the purpose behind literature, both are applicable. He is such a writer who kills two birds with one stone and achieves in his aim of doing things.

Artistically, he has compared woman with a flower, the nature of softness both in flower and woman is vivid, contrast to a man. The poet portrays effectively the feminine and masculine aspects. Paterson city is large in size and the largeness is associated with the strength of the masculinity. The softness of flower is attributed to a woman. In "Paterson" the simile used by the writer is something different, a concrete object that is "a man" is compared with another concrete object of bigger one, "the city." The city refers to Paterson a suburb, an American industrial city. It is purely personal that he has the

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sense of his own native place which he wished to bring in light with his poetry and he has written the city, its river Paterson, Passaic falls in the work. He wants to expose the river in Paterson just like river Thames in London expressed in English literature. Being an American, William Carlos Williams writes about the river of his city. The direct treatment of the city New Jersey, the adjacent city of Williams is selected for his choice as he presumes New Jersey is apt as it has the falls, mountain, park, and above all, it is tourist spot. He has come from Rutherford, his own native where he has the clinic and practices his medicine. The entire poem is the description about the physical places where the poet incorporates his emotions and imagination. The direct treatment of the objects are concerned with his own places and previously he takes objects like flowers, trees, and so on.

Using images is inevitable for any writer doing with either poems, or prose for that matter, but the degree of employing them often is taken into account. For other authors, which means, belonging to other ages, it is one of the components for doing the work of art. The writers must have thought of employing images for expressing a new context, used just like metaphor. The skillful employment of images renders the referential purpose, since figurative things instill abstract ideas into the mind when thinking process works out in rumination. The concrete object can be considered or it can be the server for expressing ideas. The concept of understanding one with another is the possibility of learning, purely a guesswork.

In the twentieth century, the poets like Marianne Moore, Hilda Doolittle, and Ezra Pound, who strongly patronized the use of images flourishingly. They predominate and as a result the other components like excessive narratives, similes, metaphors are subsided. The composition becomes something simple and also fast which means that the authors can present more number of works covering many aspects of life. The reading

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also takes place in much quantities and it is surmounted with the requirements of life. The messages are carried out absolutely through various authors.

Williams' works, particularly poems have the purpose with his own images. Images of reality or images concerned with nationalism or rather images concerned with the places, times namely seasons, eulogizing of America, are the main motto of him. His imagination is mixed with his images of reality, well in his poem "Paterson." For him, literature is art for art sake and of social purpose. Many American writers expose the social evils of slavery and racial discrimination through their works, that can be considered the moral duty of them. It is pertaining to their social consciousness, but of Williams is concerned with popularizing his own nation to the world.

The poet portrays the hill station, the water falls, the river, and everything of close to these items related to the city Paterson. The name of poem itself is referring to the city directly Paterson. He poeticizes the lines of the water falls:

Jostled as are the waters approaching  
the brink, his thoughts  
interlace, repel and cut under,  
rise rock-thwarted and turn aside  
but forever strain forward ---- or strike  
an eddy and whirl, marked by a  
leaf or curdy spume, seeming  
To forget. (52-59)

Teeming with the poetic descriptions of the water falls is a physical image and the details about the depictions are also quite realistic as well as panegyric. The rhythmic sound of the falls as "jostled," water mixing, and strike or torrential pelting with water in succession and so the surf is created "curdy spume," that refers to foam. The apt description of the falls is more perceptive, aesthetic and it leaves the readers a curiosity of the state. Everywhere in the world mountains, waterfalls, and forest are common, but the poet's account is more gravitational towards his own country. His usage of images is aligned with his own

nationality predominantly. The falls at Paterson is unique to him.

He has maintained a remarkable consistency of imagination which poured upon the physical places, and sites of the earth. There requires an extraordinary exposure and the flair for writing with the profuse supply of imagination upon a given object. Williams has learned the mastery of techniques along with styles of writing with the practical things as well as internal ones. It is the literary trend of the United States which has crept his mind. Indeed, the portrayal of objects of his land is the major drive of him.

Generally, American writers have the exclusive agenda of portraying, introducing their nation to the world to an eminence. It is strange that every nation exposes its glory to the world to a certain degree, but the United States focuses more in the perspective of magnifying it. It is a new nation but wants to grow to be the powerful one. Its literature that contributes for the development. As a new nation, it requires personalities and inspiring stories. Hence, the creative writers focus upon the physical aspects of the land which is not explored much. The writers prefer their land physically, and glorify for making a spirit in the minds of Americans. Literature is an applied art in the US and it serves for the nation-building. Further, one of the reasons for this attitude of writing in the States is mainly, it has less quantity of literary works then. The literature is evolving and pure, and there is no adulteration, no reference from other literatures. Writing is getting started to grow then to root completely with the Americanism. The notable aspect is its people who are mixed. Most of the writers are inevitably indebted to their ancestral imitations, but focus on the elements in the settled land, that is America about the seasons, locations, plants and forests, flora and fauna, and so on.

The mind of rootless or alienation is adjusted in portraying in the settled land. It is purely an artificial but practical trend in the United States. Even, the people settle



there are reluctant to emigrate to their own native country. That much enjoyment, freedom, safety, respect for the disposition of their talent are possible. All these gravitate them to be remain in the second land for ever. Williams is such a poet that he also fanatically seeks to show his American fervor through his images that are brought from the realities in terms of places and incidents predominately. On the other hand, he has effectively interwoven the images from the natural elements like celestial objects, things of nature like flowers and trees, leaves and branches and animals. In "Dawn," Williams writes:

a heavy sun  
lifts himself----is lifted---  
bit by bit above the edge  
of things,--- runs free at last  
out into the open. (10-14)

Williams says skillfully the sun which lifts "himself" in personification and of a gradual lifting. Next, on the contrary, he says that it is lifted as if by someone or something, like the nature lifts it to the height as it is an inanimate object. The writer travels from one corner to other with the fact and fancy. He might have presumed that pure imagination upon a factual object is invalid, or confusing the readers. He facilitates the readers in corresponding the information with the imagination in the same line. This technique works out more understandable with the image used, that is the sun, and its characteristics, beauty, power, radiance and so on.

The emergence of the sun is expressed in terms of its curvy movement from the bottom of the horizon to the top. At the outset, it moves up slowly. He says it is heavy that might be the reason. The readers can imagine that it moves up lethargically. He exaggerates its motion as passive that is, it has obstacles as it reaches "above the things." First in the midst of stars it is, and so it moves like a snake by clearing its way and loitering. However, the sun reaches out the top finally. Creativity and the subject are emerged in the poetry of Williams in a perfect synthesis. He takes flowers, leaves, branches, sun, moon, stars

and activates them. Thus images are framed well in his presentation. Nature's physical manifestations are interpreted aesthetically by the poet.

Ezra Pound and Hilda Doolittle influence Williams much in relation to the stress given for images in writing. Of course, they are close friends in terms of writing and they are from neighbouring locations. They meet regularly and discuss the trend of writing. They are the pioneers of the imagist movement in the modern literature. Ezra Pound is the key for the movement and pioneer for the rest of two. Hilda Doolittle, the contemporary of Williams gives "direct treatment of the thing" for composing poetry. Direct treatment refers to the autobiographical elements and selective experiences which are conveyed through some objects. Like John Keats whose personal grief is the embodiment of his poems, Hilda Doolittle is also the same case but the persuasiveness matters. She takes sea as object with which she creates her most of the poems at the initial stage. Williams' choice celestial objects, and natural objects like tree, branches, flowers, are noteworthy. Imagists are focused upon their choice of vehicles for expressions.

A new dimension in employing objects as images is found in the modern literature. Breaking out the conventions that is to say choice of forms, preference given to free verse lead the writers freely to the perfection as their mind drive spontaneously in permutation and combination. As a result, literature grows up, impresses and guides the society. As realities of life is conveyed like imagination and it will make an impact on the society. The readers could find the same in the employment of images in the poems of William Carlos Williams.

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