

William Carlos Williams

Poet Description:

Born in Rutherford, New Jersey, a town near the city of Paterson, Williams made the city his home for most of his life. He would mix cosmopolitan experience with a commitment to local American life and would maintain a remarkable dual career. From his medical practice, Williams would draw characters who appeared in his fiction and poetry; he would also remain deeply committed to their lives, to the struggles they underwent and to their sustaining humor. He was a fellow traveller on the Left, publishing in Communist journals, supporting the Spanish Republic, and earning enough of a progressive reputation to be turned down for a position as poetry consultant at the Library of Congress a year after the anticommunist witch hunts started in 1947. But Williams had been immensely influential for other poets all along, and scholars would finally rediscover him in the 1960s and 1970s. To think of American modernism now without him would be unimaginable.

Williams had met Pound and H.D. at Penn; he would later become friends with Moore and Stevens and a number of avant-garde painters based in New York. By 1916 he was writing short lyrics in a decidedly American idiom that drew on several modernist impulses. They remain among his masterpieces. *Spring and All* (1923) and *The Decent of Winter* (1928) were breakthrough volumes, radical collages of poetry and prose that mix flawless, crafted, and rather minimalist texts with passages of almost automatic writing. A highly poetic prose meditation on American myth, character, and history, *In the American Grain* (1925) would come from the same time; it is an enterprise of vision and critique that anyone interested in American literature should read. Beginning in the 1930s, Williams would write a number of novels and short stories. In the 1940s, he would begin publishing portions of his book-length poetic epic, *Paterson*. It was the fulfillment of his impassioned sense of place, and the culmination of his lifelong rejection of the Eliot/Pound expatriate impulse. Its mix of letters, documents, and lyrics was a further realization of the collage experiments of the 1920s. In his last years, he devised a triadic, or step-down, form that he called a "variable foot." It is employed in "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower," a three-part love poem to his wife, Florence.

Picture:



Gender:

Male ^[1]

Sexuality:

Straight ^[2]

First Name:

William Carlos

Last Name:

Williams

Birth & Death Dates:

Monday, September 17, 1883 to Monday, March 4, 1963

School of Poetry:

Modernist ^[3]

Birth Place:

Rutherford , New Jersey

United States

See map: Google Maps ^[4]

New Jersey US

Death Place:

Rutherford , New Jersey

United States

See map: Google Maps ^[4]

New Jersey US

Group visibility:

Private - accessible only to group members

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[3] <https://www.modernamericanpoetry.org/school-poetry/modernist>

[4] <http://maps.google.com?q=40.828248+-74.100563+Rutherford%2C+NJ%2C+us%29>