The formation of Modernist literature took place in a cultural climate characterized by an unprecedented collaboration between painters, sculptors, writers, musicians, and critics on both sides of the Atlantic. Within this multifaceted movement, William Carlos Williams is a paradigmatic case of a writer whose work was the result of a successful attempt at integrating ideas and concepts from the revolutionary visual arts. This book takes up a range of questions about the deeper affinities between Williams’s poetry and the visual arts (including photography) that have not yet been studied in depth. What connections, for example, inform Williams’s programmatic insistence on “contact” and the “shallow” or intimate space in a Cubist painting (which, as Braque advocated, should open up toward the viewer instead of receding into the infinity of the traditional vanishing point)? Are there fruitful applications of such concepts as synesthesia or kinesthesia, much talked about in Futurism and Precisionism, to Williams’s preoccupation with an “aesthetics of energy”? How does Williams successfully integrate in his poetry such fundamentally different concepts as Kandinsky’s theory of expression and Duchamp’s notion of the ready-made?

This book is a major step toward a fuller exploration of the connection between the visual arts and Williams’s concept of the Modernist poem, and of his achievement in transcending an art-for-art’s-sake formalism to create poems which both reflect their own nature as a work of art and vividly evoke the world of which they are a part. As Williams repeatedly stressed, “[I]t must not be forgot that we smell, hear, and see with words and words alone, and that with a new language we smell, hear and see afresh. . . .”
CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN AMERICAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE

The Revolution in the Visual Arts and the Poetry of William Carlos Williams
The Revolution in the Visual Arts and the Poetry of William Carlos Williams

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Abbreviations

1 WORKS BY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS


AN A Novelette and Other Prose (Other Prose includes the essays “An Essay on Virginia,” “Marianne Moore,” and “The Work of Gertrude Stein,” here abbreviated “EV,” “MM,” and “WGS.”)

DW The Descent of Winter

GAN The Great American Novel

KH Kora in Hell: Improvisations

SA Spring and All


ABBREVIATIONS


2  MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

L, SUNY  The Lockwood Memorial Library, State University of New York at Buffalo.

YALC  Yale American Literature Collection, Beinecke Library of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Yale University, New Haven.

3  OTHER WORKS