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978-1-107-09515-1 - The Cambridge Companion To William Carlos Williams

Edited by Christopher Macgowan

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

This *Companion* contains thirteen new essays from leading international experts on William Carlos Williams, covering his major poetry and prose works – including *Paterson*, *In the American Grain*, and the Stecher Trilogy. It addresses central issues of recent Williams scholarship and discusses a wide variety of topics: Williams and the visual arts, Williams and medicine, Williams's version of local modernism, Williams and gender, Williams and multiculturalism, and more. Authors examine Williams's relationships with figures such as Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, H. D., and Marianne Moore, and illustrate the importance of his legacy for Allen Ginsberg, Amiri Baraka, Robert Creeley, Robert Lowell, and numerous contemporary poets. Featuring a chronology and an up-to-date bibliography of the writer, *The Cambridge Companion to William Carlos Williams* is an invaluable guide for students of this influential literary figure.

Christopher MacGowan is Professor of English at the College of William & Mary. He is the author of *Twentieth-Century American Poetry* and *William Carlos Williams's Early Poetry: The Visual Arts Background* and editor of numerous books, including *The Letters of Denise Levertov and William Carlos Williams* and *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams, Volumes I* (with A. Walton Litz) and *II*.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book

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College of William & Mary



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IAN COPESTAKE is an independent scholar based in Frankfurt am Main. He is the current editor of the *William Carlos Williams Review* and President of the William Carlos Williams Society. He is the author of *The Ethics of William Carlos Williams's Poetry* (2010) and the editor of *The Legacy of William Carlos Williams: Points of Contact* (2007), *Rigor of Beauty: Essays in Commemoration of William Carlos Williams* (2004), and *American Postmodernity: Essays on the Recent Fiction of Thomas Pynchon* (2003).

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Chopin, Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, Denise Levertov, and Louis Zukofsky, as well as Williams. She is the co-editor of and a contributor to *The Rhetoric of Love in the Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams* (1993).

PETER HALTER is Professor Emeritus of American Literature at the University of Lausanne. He is the author of *The Revolution in the Visual Arts and the Poetry of William Carlos Williams* (1994) as well as a study on Katherine Mansfield and the short story. He has also published numerous articles, mainly on various aspects of modernism, with a special focus on the interaction of literature and the visual arts, including photography.

JOHN LOWNY is Professor of English at St. John's University, New York. He is the author of *The American Avant-Garde Tradition: William Carlos Williams, Postmodern Poetry, and the Politics of Cultural Memory* (1997) and *History, Memory, and the Literary Left: Modern American Poetry, 1935–1968* (2006). He is currently completing a book titled “Jazz Internationalism: Literary Afro-Modernism and the Cultural Politics of Jazz.”

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GLEN MACLEOD is the author of *Wallace Stevens and Company* (1983) and *Wallace Stevens and Modern Art* (1993). He has published essays on Williams, Stevens, E. E. Cummings, Henry James, and Hawthorne, among others, and has edited special issues of *The William Carlos Williams Review* on Williams and Stevens, and Williams and Surrealism. He is a professor of English at the University of Connecticut, Waterbury.

ALEC MARSH is Professor of English at Muhlenberg College. He is the author of the prize-winning *Money and Modernity: Pound, Williams, and the Spirit of Jefferson* (1998), a biography of Ezra Pound (2011), *John Kasper & Ezra Pound: Saving the Republic* (2015), and numerous essays on Pound, Williams, and other modernist poets. He has for some years been one of the author reviewers for the annual *American Literary Scholarship* volumes.

J. A. MARZÁN/JULIO MARZÁN, poet, novelist, and scholar, teaches at SUNY/Nassau Community College, New York. He is the author of the award-winning *The Spanish American Roots of William Carlos Williams* (1994), and wrote the introduction to *By Word of Mouth: Poetry from the Spanish by William Carlos Williams*, ed. Jonathan Cohen (2011). In 2006 he was Visiting Professor of

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Romance Languages at Harvard University, where he lectured on William Carlos Williams and Luis Palés Matos.

LISA M. STEINMAN is the Kenan Professor of English and Humanities at Reed College. A poet and teacher, her books include *Made in America: Science, Technology, and American Modernist Poets* (1987), *Invitation to Poetry: The Pleasures of Studying Poetry and Poetics* (2008), and *Absence and Presence* (2013), as well as a number of articles on Williams. Along with Jim Shugrue, she is co-editor of the poetry magazine *Hubbub*.

ERIN E. TEMPLETON is the Anne Morrison Chapman Distinguished Professor of International Study at Converse College. She has published essays on the gender dynamics of Williams's *Paterson* and Williams's relationship with Italian poet Emanuel Carnevali. She has also published essays and reviews on the work of Pound, Yeats, Eliot, and Moore, and she has been a contributing writer for the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* blog "ProfHacker" since 2009.

ERIC B. WHITE is Senior Lecturer in American Literature at Oxford Brookes University. He is the author of *Transatlantic Avant-Gardes: Little Magazines and Localist Modernism* (2013) and has published a number of articles on Williams and his contemporaries. In 2013 he guest-edited the Thirtieth Anniversary number of the *William Carlos Williams Review*.

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CHRONOLOGY

- 1883 September 17. Born in Rutherford, New Jersey. Oldest son of William George and Raquel Hélène Rose Hoheb Williams.
- 1884 Birth of brother Edgar Irving Williams.
- 1889–1896 Attends local schools in Rutherford.
- 1897–1899 First trip to Europe. Both brothers attend a year at Château de Lancy near Geneva. They then spend some months in Paris.
- 1899–1902 Commutes to attend Horace Mann School in New York City.
- 1902–1906 Studies medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Meets Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle, and Charles Demuth. Develops an interest in drama. Imitates Keats in his poetry.
- 1906–1908 Interns at French Hospital, New York City.
- 1908–1909 Interns at Child’s Hospital, resigns on principle.
- 1909 First book, *Poems*, self-published, title page designed by Edgar. Proposes to Florence Herman, “Flossie,” in July.
- 1909–1910 Studies pediatrics in Leipzig from September to February. Travels include France, Italy, Spain, and England – where he meets up with Pound in March.
- 1910 Begins medical practice at 131 West Passaic Avenue, Rutherford, in September.
- 1912 First magazine publication, in *The Poetry Review*, London: “A Selection from *The Tempers* . . . With Introductory Note by Ezra Pound.” Marries Florence Herman, December 12.
- 1913 *The Tempers* published in London by Elkin Mathews. In August publishes only medical article, in *Archives of Pediatrics*: “The Normal and Adventitious Danger Periods for Pulmonary Disease in Children.” In November Williams and Florence move to 9 Ridge Road, where Williams sets up

CHRONOLOGY

- home and medical practice. Begins publishing regularly in *Poetry* and *The Egoist*.
- 1914 Birth of first child, William Eric Williams.
- 1915–1916 Through Pound contacts Grantwood, New Jersey, artists' colony. There and in New York meets Alfred Kreymborg, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, Marcel Duchamp, and Man Ray.
- 1916 Birth of second child, Paul Herman Williams.
- 1917 *Al Que Quiere!* published in Boston by The Four Seas Company.
- 1918 Christmas Day. Death of his father.
- 1919 July, edits last issue of *Others*.
- 1920 *Kora in Hell: Improvisations* published. With Robert McAlmon edits *Contact*. Death of grandmother, Emily Dickinson Wellcome.
- 1921 Publishes *Sour Grapes*.
- 1923 *Spring and All* and *The Great American Novel* published in Paris. Begins a sabbatical year in the summer. Begins writing *In the American Grain*.
- 1924 January–June, in Europe with Flossie, visits France, Italy, Austria, and Switzerland. In Paris meets McAlmon, Pound, Joyce, Ford Madox Ford.
- 1925 *In the American Grain* published by Albert and Charles Boni, first commercial publication.
- 1926 Wins the *Dial* award for “Paterson” a precursor of the longer poem to come.
- 1927 September, final trip to Europe, with family. Returns end of the month while Flossie stays with the boys for their school year in Geneva. While in Paris Williams meets Gertrude Stein. *Voyage to Pagany* published.
- 1928 “The Descent of Winter” published in Ezra Pound’s *Exile*. March 1928 meets Louis Zukofsky.
- 1931 Zukofsky guest edits the “Objectivist” number of *Poetry*, and includes Williams. With Flossie takes trip down the St. Lawrence to Newfoundland. Wins *Poetry*’s Guarantors Prize.
- 1932 Edits a revival of *Contact* with Nathanael West. Publishes *The Knife of the Times*, short stories.
- 1934 Publishes *Collected Poems, 1921–1931*, with The Objectivist Press, Preface by Wallace Stevens.

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- 1935 Publishes *An Early Martyr and Other Poems* with Alcestis Press, 165 copies printed.
- 1936 Publishes *Adam & Eve & The City* with Alcestis, 167 copies printed.
- 1937 Begins publishing with James Laughlin's New Directions, starting with the first novel of the Stecher trilogy, *White Mule*.
- 1938 *Life Along the Passaic River* (stories) and *The Complete Collected Poems*.
- 1939 Ford Madox Ford starts Les Amis des William Carlos Williams. Sees Pound on his visit to the United States.
- 1940 Publishes *In the Money*, second novel of the Stecher trilogy.
- 1941 *The Broken Span* pamphlet, visits Puerto Rico.
- 1942 Meets Marcia Nardi, the "Cress" of *Paterson*.
- 1944 Publishes *The Wedge*.
- 1946 *Paterson (Book One)* published.
- 1948 Heart attack. Publishes *Paterson (Book Two)*, wins the American Academy of Arts and Letters' Russell Loines Award.
- 1949 *Selected Poems, Paterson (Book Three)*, death of his mother Hélène Williams. Son William Eric starts to take over the medical practice.
- 1950 New Directions publish *Collected Later Poems* and *Make Light of It: Collected Stories*. Wins National Book Award. Signs contract with Random House. First book-length study, by Vivienne Koch.
- 1951 Stroke. Publishes *Paterson (Book Four)* and *Collected Earlier Poems* with New Directions, *Autobiography* with Random House.
- 1952 Completes Stecher trilogy with *The Build-Up*. Serious stroke in August. Appointed as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress but runs into opposition because of political pressure.
- 1953 Hospitalized for depression. Forced to give up Library of Congress appointment. Wins Bollingen Prize, shared with Archibald MacLeish.
- 1954 Publishes *The Desert Music, Selected Essays*.
- 1955 Publishes *Journey to Love*, undertakes reading tour across the country.
- 1956 Writes the introduction to Allen Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems*.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1957 Leaves Random House, *Selected Letters* published by McDowell, Obolensky.
- 1958 *Paterson (Book Five)* published, and *I Wanted to Write a Poem*. Third stroke.
- 1959 Publishes *Yes, Mrs. Williams*. The Living Theater produces *Many Loves* Off Broadway.
- 1961 Starts a sixth book of *Paterson* but has to give up writing because of strokes.
- 1962 Publishes *Pictures from Brueghel*.
- 1963 March 4, dies in Rutherford. MacGibbon & Kee contract to publish Williams in England. Williams posthumously awarded Pulitzer Prize and National Institute of Arts and Letters Gold Medal for Poetry.
- 1970 New Directions publish *Imaginations*, first reprinting of full texts of *Kora in Hell*, *Spring and All*, and “The Descent of Winter” since the 1920s.
- 1975 *William Carlos Williams Newsletter* (subsequently *William Carlos Williams Review*) begins publication.
- 1976 Florence Williams dies.
- 1983 To celebrate Williams’s 100th birthday National Poetry Foundation publishes *William Carlos Williams: Man and Poet*, includes an interview with Robert Creeley and essays by Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, Pound, and Marjorie Perloff, among others.
- 1986 *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams, Volume I: 1909–1939* includes previously uncollected poems, as does *Volume II, 1939–1962* published in 1988.
- 1992 Inducted into The Poets’ Corner of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, New York City, October 25.

ABBREVIATIONS

A	<i>The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams</i> . New York: Random House, 1951.
ARI	<i>A Recognizable Image: William Carlos Williams on Art and Artists</i> . Ed. Bram Dijkstra. New York: New Directions, 1978.
CP ₁	<i>The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams: Volume I, 1909–1939</i> . Ed. A. Walton Litz and Christopher MacGowan. New York: New Directions, 1986.
CP ₂	<i>The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams: Volume II, 1939–1962</i> . Ed. Christopher MacGowan. New York: New Directions, 1988.
DL/WCW	<i>The Letters of Denise Levertov and William Carlos Williams</i> . Ed. Christopher MacGowan. New York: New Directions, 1998.
DS	<i>The Doctor Stories</i> . Compiled by Robert Coles. New York: New Directions, 1984.
EK	<i>The Embodiment of Knowledge</i> . Ed. Ron Loewinsohn. New York: New Directions, 1974.
FD	<i>The Farmers' Daughters: The Collected Stories of William Carlos Williams</i> . Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1961.
I	<i>Imaginations</i> . Ed. Webster Schott [Contains <i>Kora in Hell</i> , <i>Spring and All</i> , <i>The Great American Novel</i> , "The Descent of Winter," and <i>A Novelette and Other Prose</i>]. New York: New Directions, 1970.
IAG	<i>In the American Grain</i> . New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925.
IWWP	<i>I Wanted to Write a Poem</i> . Ed. Edith Heal. Boston: Beacon Press, 1958.

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Leibowitz	Herbert Leibowitz, <i>“Something Urgent I Have to Say to You”: The Life and Works of William Carlos Williams</i> . New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2011.
Mariani	Paul Mariani, <i>William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked</i> . New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981.
ML	<i>Many Loves and Other Plays: The Collected Plays of William Carlos Williams</i> . Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1961.
P	<i>Paterson</i> . Ed. Christopher MacGowan. New York: New Directions, 1992.
P/W	<i>Pound/Williams: Selected Letters of Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams</i> . Ed. Hugh Witemeyer. New York: New Directions, 1996.
SE	<i>Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams</i> . New York: Random House, 1954.
SL	<i>The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams</i> . Ed. John Thirlwall. New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1957.
SSA	<i>Interviews with William Carlos Williams: “Speaking Straight Ahead.”</i> Ed. Linda Wagner. New York: New Directions, 1976.
STS	<i>Something to Say: William Carlos Williams on Younger Poets</i> . Ed. James E.B. Breslin. New York: New Directions, 1985.
VP	<i>A Voyage to Pagany</i> . New York: Macaulay, 1928.
WCW/EW	<i>The Letters of William Carlos Williams to Edgar Irving Williams, 1902–1912</i> . Ed. Andrew J. Krivak. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009.
WCW/JL	<i>William Carlos Williams and James Laughlin: Selected Letters</i> . Ed. Hugh Witemeyer. New York: Norton, 1989.
WCW/LZ	<i>The Correspondence of William Carlos Williams and Louis Zukofsky</i> . Ed. Barry Ahearn. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003.
YMW	<i>Yes, Mrs. Williams: A Personal Record of my Mother</i> . New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959.