

It happens that this type of sensibility, persisting through forty years, is of extreme, and almost unique, value in a land teeming, swarming, pullulating with clever people all capable of competent and almost instantaneous extroversion; during the last twenty of these years it has distinguished Dr Williams from the floral and unconscious mind of the populace and from the snappy go-getters who'd'er seen wot wuz rong in er moment.

It has prevented our author from grabbing ready made conclusions, and from taking too much for granted.

Our national mind hath about it something 'marvelous porous'; an idea or notion dropped into N. Y. harbour emerges in Santa Fe or Galveston, watered, diluted, but still the same idea or notion, pale but not wholly denatured; and the time of transit is very considerably lower, than any "record" hitherto known.



Williams has written: "All I do is to try to understand something in its natural colours and shapes."

Ezra Pound: Dr WILLIAMS POSITION

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"You must understand if you change the poetic line, you change civilization."

William Carlos Williams

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Accuracy. Williams' accuracy. The phrase "clamp your mind down on objects" is his. The phrase "no ideas but in things" is his. Does everybody understand what that means? ... It means, "no general ideas in your poetry." Don't put out any abstract ideas about things, but present the things themselves that gave you the ideas.

Williams got into this because reality had become so confusing in the twentieth century, and poetry had got so freaked out that it was strange: he didn't know what poetry was! He didn't know what anything was! But he knew where his nose was and could begin there. He gave up all ideas (meaning abstractions) and started with things themselves... That's the whole point; dealing with this universe. And that was a fantastic discovery: that you can actually make poetry by dealing with this universe instead of creating another one.

Allen Ginsberg: WILLIAMS IN A WORLD OF OBJECTS

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Anne Janowitz places Williams squarely in the old American tradition of tinkering with things and inventing contraptions to make them work. Whitman, who says he is "Bluff'd not a bit by drain-pipe, gasometers ... installed amid the kitchen ware," only carried on Emerson's idea: "Machinery and Transcendentalism agree well." They both followed Ben Franklin's recommendation that society contrive "new mechanical inventions for saving labour... and all philosophical experiments that let light into the nature of things." Williams approaches poetic form in the same way. Says he: Just as an "automobile or kitchen stove is an organization of materials ... poems are mechanical objects made out of words to express a certain thing." He tinkered with PATERSON for thirty years and more, but he was tinkering with a more and more clearly defined purpose and vocation: one thing you can't tinker with is things as they are.

Carroll Terrell: WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS / MAN AND POET