

# The American Avant-garde Tradition: William Carlos Williams, Postmodern Poetry, And The Politics Of Cultural Memory

**John Lowney**

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Williams is more strongly associated with the American Modernist movement in literature, and saw his poetic project as a distinctly American one; he sought to renew language through the fresh, raw idiom that grew out of America's cultural and social heterogeneity, at the same time freeing it from what he saw as the worn-out language of British and European culture. Williams tried to invent an entirely fresh form, an American form of poetry whose subject matter was centered on everyday circumstances of life and the lives of common people. In May 1963, he was posthumously awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems* (1962) and the Gold Medal for Poetry of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. *The American Avant-Garde Tradition* book. Read reviews from world's largest community for readers. This book clarifies William Carlos Williams's impact On... Start by marking "The American Avant-Garde Tradition: William Carlos Williams, Postmodern Poetry, and the Politics of Cultural Memory" as Want to Read: Want to Read saving... Want to Read. *The American Avant-Garde Tradition: William Carlos Williams, Postmodern Poetry, and the Politics of Cultural Memory*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 1997. Mariani, Paul L. *William Carlos Williams: a new world naked*. Williams felt that the proper use of the American, rather than the English, language is essential for modern American poetry, and he believes that all art depends for its assurance and firmness upon local and immediate tradition. It is the task of the modern American poet to discover a form appropriate to America (646).

This does not make them exempt from the allpervasive effects of cultural marketeering and the attendant culpability associated with the postmodern. As Robert Hampson points out in relation to Ezra Pound's famous dictum, "Make It New" has to confront the fact that "the new" is also used to sell the latest car or weapons system. "avant-garde" poem "lack of closure, narrative redistribution, use of procedural methodologies of writing, fragmentation and proliferation of the lyric subject, use of found material, a demand for the active engagement of the reader and so on" are clearly to be found in the work of British Modernists such as Hope Mirrlees, Basil Bunting, David Jones, Mina Loy and W. S. Graham. Its immediate postmodern precursors were the New American poets, a term including the New York School, the Objectivist poets, the Black Mountain School, the Beat poets, and the San Francisco Renaissance. In the 1950s and 1960s, certain groups of poets had followed William Carlos Williams in his use of idiomatic American English rather than what they considered the 'heightened,' or overtly poetic language favored by the New Criticism movement. New York School poets like Frank O'Hara and the Black Mountain group emphasized both speech and everyday language in their poetry and poetics. Language Poetry and the American Avant-Garde. Keele: British Association for American Studies, 1993. Watten, Barrett. \* \* \* William Carlos Williams is best known as a modern American poet. His achievement as a novelist and writer of short fiction have too been recognized. He was also a doctor who specialized in pediatric medicine. He was for a time drawn quite strongly to Europe and the ostensibly higher levels of culture and especially the Anglo-European impulses and traditions. But his devotion to things American, American cities, American art, American people, the egalitarian and democratic premises of government, the melting-pot of diverse immigrants combined to provide his subject in his stories, his poems, and in his masterpiece of revisionist history, In the American Grain.