This book—a powerful and rewarding rediscovery of the work of William Carlos Williams—is cast in the form of a tutorial. Mr. Berry evokes a personal setting—neither an office in academe nor a classroom—where, quietly and hospitably, he “invites” his reader to read aloud with him and to follow with him—by scrutinizing selected poems from an aesthetic, technical, and theoretical point of view—in order to reveal the collective effort of Williams’ lifelong struggle to find a poetry “useful” to his place. All of Williams’ 1,200 collected poems are required reading.

The absence of a didactic or pedantic framework does not make things any easier for the reader who, while being courteously addressed by Mr. Berry as “you” throughout the book, is duly warned that he is participating at Mr. Berry’s level. The author cues the reader to the difficulty he will face when he notes “I have never learned anything easily.” The reader must engage new concepts—“local adaptation,” “embodied imagination,” and a critical prose rich with references to writers with ecological expertise.

Mr. Berry develops his theme of “imagination” extensively—the term is featured in Williams’ little-known theoretical essay ‘the prose of Spring and All; the reader is required to follow along with Mr. Berry as he analyzes Dr. Williams’ prosody—in order to be brought closer to a face-to-face understanding of the extreme difficulties he faced, in his tasks as a poet while living and practicing medicine in Rutherford, New Jersey, during the early part of the last century. The collective record of Williams’ struggle in the totality of his work in poetry, to find a “credible” language, emerges in the index as a main theme.

To understand The Poetry of William Carlos Williams of Rutherford requires a re-casting of the mind—the reader’s enjoyment of Williams’ poetry is enhanced, his/her appreciation of Williams’ artistic struggle is greatly increased, and, through effort, he/she can acquire critical tools useful to both the scholar and to the general reader. The index mediates between the text and the reader by taking into account the wide scope of Mr. Berry’s essay: its defined terms have been boldfaced and important related main headings cross-referenced.

**Note:** bold entries reference defined terms, phrases, or titles which are necessary to the structure of the argument put forward in the text. WB is an abbreviation for Wendell Berry; WCW is an abbreviation for William Carlos Williams; TCPWCW is an abbreviation for The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams.
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