



Asphodel, That Greeny Flower and Other Love Poems: That Greeny Flower

William Carlos Williams , Herbert Leibowitz (Designed by) , Herbert Liebowitz (Introduction)

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'Asphodel' celebrates unforgettably Williams' love for his wife Floss, (going) so far as to say, 'Death is not the end of it'...'Asphodel' strands impressively as the poet's personal credo, a late, long poem central to his entire work.' -- World Literature Today

Asphodel, That Greeny Flower and Other Love Poems: That Greeny Flower Details

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From Reader Review *Asphodel, That Greeny Flower* and Other Love Poems: *That Greeny Flower* for online ebook

Jenna says

This book reveals a side of WCW (a poet most famous for his formal innovations and avant-gardeness) that most people don't know about. The short poems are good, but it is the long title poem that really deserves the accolades -- it's basically an affirmation of life and the immortality of love, written by WCW at a time when death and marital troubles seemed about to overtake him. A mellow, mature poem that oscillates among many different modes of expression: rambling stream-of-consciousness, logical argumentativeness, etc. The scope and overall large-mindedness of the poem are impressive: it deals not only with personal emotional matters (WCW's rocky, infidelity-ridden marriage in particular), but also with large-scale political matters (the Cold War, unrest in South America, etc.) as well as historical events all around the globe. This is a book written by a man with a social conscience and an international perspective, who also happened to be deeply and fallibly in love, both with his wife and with words.

Sanjay Varma says

I have always had a strong visceral reaction against didactic writing in fiction/poetry. I realized this when reading *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. I didn't like the way the dad would always lecture his son about various stuff, and the son's role was to be nothing, a wide-eyed imbecile, whose only contribution is to hang on every word his dad uttered. In other words...the son was a stand-in for the reader.

I felt the same way when I read the title poem of this collection. WCW cheated on his wife and confessed this to her at age 72 when he was an invalid and absolutely dependent on her care. She, after learning about all these betrayals, stayed with him. He "rewarded" her by writing this egotistical poem in which he didactically lectures her about the meaning of love, growing old, etc. Is WCW qualified to write this poem? I suppose that he is, in the same way that most books about "making your marriage work" are written by authors who have been divorced multiple times. But this poem isn't about being honest about mistakes, and pointing the way to an honest reconciliation. It's about obscuring his mistakes through rhetorical tricks, while taking for granted that his wife is a wide-eyed nobody who will hang on his every self-important word. Or to put it another way, the wife is merely a stand-in for the reader.

Do any feminists have a problem with this? Sure, a concept of female exists in this poem, but it makes you almost long for the days when women were objectified. WCW's wife has such a minimal presence here. What is the right word to convey this? Perhaps particle physics can provide a word...string theorists claim that the universe has eleven dimensions but you can't see seven of them because they've been "compactified". Similarly, I think that WCW's wife exists in the universe of this poem but she has been compacted.

The book also contains a handful of shorter poems which are generally pretty great.

PS. The wife's name was "Flossie"

Andrew says

Sensual and heartfelt. I never understood his structure and never cared. His sentiments were what mattered and they were beyond articulate.

Steven Godin says

My first venture into the work of William Carlos Williams (inspired to do so by a family member & Jim Jarmusch's latest film 'paterson' which I adored). Read this and 'Spring and All' back to back, was very impressed with both collections. The title poem here was just so gorgeous I wanted to wrap my arms around it, holding it tight, to squeeze all the love out.

Look forward to more of his poems in the future.

An excerpt from Asphodel, That Greeny Flower (which I couldn't resist) below.

It was the love of love,
the love that swallows up all else,
a grateful love,
a love of nature, of people,
of animals,
a love engendering
gentleness and goodness
that moved me
and that I saw in you.
I should have known,
though I did not,
that the lily-of-the-valley
is a flower makes many ill
who whiff it.
We had our children,
rivals in the general onslaught.
I put them aside
though I cared for them.
as well as any man
could care for his children
according to my lights.
You understand
I had to meet you
after the event
and have still to meet you.
Love.

Mikael says

pour nous mais n'en doutons point!

Dasha says

Love Asphodel - read in a barely audible whisper to myself - in order to keep the words from slipping through cracks.

The first short poem was like a green apple - crisp and delicious. The rest - less so.

Monica says

my favorite poem of all time.

Sara Judy says

I love this slim volume for bringing the full text of 'Asphodel' into my library. Between that and 'The Ivy Crown,' this little book brings together my favorite WCW poems. I only wish it had a better cover, but you can't have it all.

Chris Herdt says

A gift from Tina. I read "The Ivy Crown" at my grandparents' 50th wedding anniversary.

Markus says

Asphodel That Greeny Flower
Williams Carlos Williams (1883-1963)

« Having your love
I was rich.
Thinking that I have lost it
I am tortured
And cannot rest.”

Williams was one of the most popular American ‘modernist’ poets of the early nineteenth century.

A Medical Doctor by profession, his passion for love and skill for writing compelled him to become an unconventional Poet of Love.

In his younger years, he frequented Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot among other modernists but soon found his own style.

“Asphodel” was composed in his later years at the age of seventy-two and can be seen as a conclusive way of expressing his life’s hopes and failings especially in relation to his wife Floss.

It leaves the reader with enough hints and space to create a picture which might well be different for every reader according to his own life and relation to love and poetry.

A must-read for all admirers of modern poetry.

Kenny says

"What power has love but forgiveness?

In other words

by its intervention

what has been done

can be undone."

William Carlos Williams

This slim volume contains 12 beautiful poems written by William Carlos Williams. "**Asphodel, That Greeny Flower**", the title poem, is 32 pages long. What is amazing is that Williams wrote this piece at the age of 72. His creative powers were as strong and vital as they had been in his 20's, if not more so.

An interesting footnote, Williams was a doctor. He often wrote his poems on the back of prescription pads.

Williams' poems are lyrical; his use of language is gorgeous, and unconventional. What fascinates me most about these poems is that at the age of 72, he was writing some of his most unorthodox poems. While physically, Williams was diminished physically by a series of strokes, his creative talents were as strong as ever. Did you ever think you'd read a love poem referencing both the bomb, and the Rosenbergs?

Galina Krasskova says

His poetry perplexes me. There are beautiful classical allusions, but they fall short of moving me because the structure in which they're positioned is so..prosaic. yet then i read them aloud and the flow like gentle waves lapping a shore compels me, but then the topic is simply love and that rarely moves me. so I find his poetry intensely perplexing.
