

Guide to the T.C. Wilson Papers

YCAL MSS 36



by William K. Finley

January 1989

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	3
Requesting Instructions	3
Administrative Information	3
Immediate Source of Acquisition	3
Conditions Governing Access	3
Conditions Governing Use	4
Preferred Citation	4
THEODORE CARL WILSON	4
Scope and Contents	4
Collection Contents	6
Series I: Correspondence, 1928-50	6
Series II: Writings, 1934-47	10
Series III: Other Papers, 1933-41	11
Restricted Fragile Papers	12
CORRESPONDENCE	12
WRITINGS	12
Selected Search Terms	13

Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 36

CREATOR: Wilson, T. C. (Theodore Carl), 1912-1950

TITLE: T. C. Wilson Papers

DATES: (1928-1947)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2.25 linear feet (6 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The T. C. Wilson Papers consist of correspondence, writings, and personal papers relating to the life and career of American poet-critic Theodore Carl Wilson.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.tcwilson>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.tcwilson>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The T. C. Wilson Papers were presented to Yale University in 1951 by Horace Gregory, Wilson's literary executor.

Conditions Governing Access

Restricted Fragile Papers in box 6 may only be consulted with permission of the appropriate curator. Preservation photocopies for reference use have been substituted in the main files.

Conditions Governing Use

The T. C. Wilson Papers are the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

T. C. Wilson Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

THEODORE CARL WILSON

Theodore Carl Wilson, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter E. Wilson, was reared in Columbus, Ohio, where he attended public schools. A voracious reader at an early age, Wilson wrote book reviews for a local newspaper while still in high school and had several juvenile poems published by the time he was sixteen.

Wilson graduated from Ohio State University in 1932 with a major in English. He subsequently enrolled in a Master's program in English at the University of Michigan (1933-1935) and presumably completed this degree. While at Michigan, he won the Hopwood Award for literary merit.

Serving with Ezra Pound, James Laughlin, and several others as editor of the *Bozart-Westminster* poetry anthology of Oglethorpe College for 1935, Wilson began an exchange of letters with Pound, who greatly influenced his early conception of poetical style and the social obligations of the creative author.

During the 1930s Wilson published poems, reviews, and articles in leading journals such as *The Nation*, *Hound and Horn*, *Poetry*, and *The Saturday Review of Literature*. His poetry of this period often reflects his interest and involvement in socialism. In 1937 he served as American representative for the British publication *Life and Letters Today*.

Wilson counted among his friends and advisors such well-known authors as Elizabeth Bishop, Horace Gregory, Marianne Moore, and William Carlos Williams. His poetry and prose won the praise of Pound, T. S. Eliot, Morton Zabel, and other prominent literary figures.

After serving in the U. S. Army in World War II, Wilson found it difficult to pick up his literary career, although he worked on both poetry and a projected book of literary criticism. He died while living at the Marlton Hotel in New York City in 1950 at the age of thirty-eight.

Scope and Contents

The T. C. Wilson Papers consist mainly of professional and personal correspondence between poet-critic Theodore Carl Wilson (1912-1950) and many prominent writers, critics, and editors in the 1930s and copies of Wilson's poems, essays, and miscellaneous notes. The correspondence dates between 1928 and 1950, with the majority of letters dated between 1934 and 1940. Wilson's own writings are largely undated, but the bulk appear to have been written in the 1930s.

The collection is composed of three series: I. *Correspondence*, II. *Writings*, and III. *Papers*.

[Series I, Correspondence](#) (Boxes 1-2), is alphabetically arranged and contains letters from such prominent authors, critics, and editors as Elizabeth Bishop, Henry Seidel Canby, Richard Eberhart, T. S. Eliot, Horace Gregory, Arthur Machen, Harriet Monroe, Marianne Moore, Kenneth Patchen, Ezra Pound, Muriel Rukeyser, Wallace Stevens, Allen Tate, William Carlos Williams, Edmund Wilson, Yvor Winters, and Morton Zabel. Many of these letters offer illuminating comments on works of literature, authors, publishing, and artistic concerns and problems during the Depression years.

Elizabeth Bishop's letters discuss her travels in the United States and abroad, her readings, and her tastes in music, with occasional brief comments on her writing and that of others. Richard Eberhart

comments on several of his own early poems and on the stances of various literary journals in the 1930s. His evaluations of poems appearing in a special poetry issue of *Bozart-Westminster* (1935) reveal his criteria for good poetry. Poet-professor Horace Gregory comments on leftist writing, trends in poetical styles, and prominent critics (especially Malcolm Cowley). Marianne Moore gives advice to a young poet on writing and on life, comments on poetic style and her own readings, and offers brief evaluations of such writers as Stevens, Cummings, Pound, and Bishop.

Letters and notes from Ezra Pound to Wilson reveal Pound's views on style and trends in poetry, politics and economic issues (Roosevelt's New Deal, communism, the political situation in Russia and Italy, etc.), responsibilities of the creative writer in the 1930s, and the relationship of poetry and music. Pound offers his own unreserved evaluations of many literary publications, authors, and editors, among them Eliot, Amy Lowell, William Carlos Williams, and Louis Untermeyer. Many letters reveal Pound's disgust with American writing and politics in the 1930s. A letter of December 4, 1933 gives Pound's definition of "modernist verse."

The letters of Edmund Wilson, Morton Zabel, Marya Zaturenska, and Canadian poet W. W. E. Ross comment on Pound, while Wallace Stevens briefly evaluates the poetry of Marianne Moore, and in a short 1933 letter Yvor Winters compares the merits of Pound, Williams, Stevens, Moore, and Robert Bridges.

Among other topics, William Carlos Williams comments on *Blast*, the question of emotion in poetry, the lack of quality writing in the United States in the 1930s, and his difficulties in getting his work published. His letter of July 12, 1933 offers an evaluation of Eliot as editor and writer and discusses the necessity of capturing the "New World" American experience in literature. Several letters consider appropriate subject matter for poetry, especially a letter of December 23, 1933, where he mentions his interest in "objects" as poetical subjects.

From various editors of *Poetry*, *The American Scholar*, and *The Saturday Review* come revealing letters on current literary trends as seen from an editor's viewpoint. In addition, numerous minor poets and prose writers comment on their art, the problems of getting published, and the general literary scene in the 1930s. Taken as a whole, the letters reveal much about artistic life during the Depression years.

Included with the correspondence are holograph or typescript poems from many prominent poets: Elizabeth Bishop (3), E. E. Cummings (2), Richard Eberhart (1), Robert Fitzgerald (1), Robert Frost (1), Marianne Moore (4), Kenneth Patchen (7), Muriel Rukeyser (3), and William Carlos Williams (6).

[Series II, Writings](#) (Boxes 3-4), is composed of six alphabetically arranged subseries: Essays, Notebooks, Notes, Poems, Poetry Notebooks, and Projected Book of Literary Criticism. The subseries Essays contains Wilson's complete or fragmentary writings on such authors as Eliot, Melville, Marianne Moore, Pound, Rimbaud, and William Carlos Williams. The subseries Poems, arranged alphabetically by title or first line, contains some eighty apparently complete poems and numerous fragments. The poems are either in holograph or typescript, many with several drafts and most containing some authorial corrections. There are also five notebooks of poems and fragments dated between 1934 and 1939. The subseries Notes contains interpretations (taken mainly from other sources) of such writers as Cocteau, Eliot, James, Melville, Pound, Rilke, Rimbaud, and Valery. The notebooks contain Wilson's observations on the works of such writers as Conrad, Rilke, Melville, James, Kafka, Tolstoi, Turgenev, and Marianne Moore.

[Series III, Other Papers](#) (Box 5), is divided into typescript submissions to the Spring-Summer, 1935 issue of the *Bozart-Westminster* anthology, which Wilson coedited with Ezra Pound and four others; other typescripts or printed poems by various authors; three typescript literary essays by Pound, two of which served, in shortened form, as a foreword to the *Bozart-Westminster* anthology; and miscellaneous papers, which include a photograph of Wilson, transcripts of his academic work at Ohio State and the University of Michigan, and copies of photographs by Walker Evans, Bernice Abbot, and Sylvia Saunders.

The [fragile papers](#) in Box 6 consist of originals for which preservation photocopies have been made.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1928-50

0.75 linear feet (2 boxes)

Series I, *Correspondence*, is arranged alphabetically by surname. Unidentified correspondence has been placed at the end of the series.

b. 1, f. 1	Abbott, C. D.	1939
b. 1, f. 2	Ames, Elizabeth	1936-39
b. 1, f. 3	Anderson-Gillespie, Marie	1933, n.d.
b. 1, f. 4	Barnard, Mary	1934-39
b. 1, f. 5	Bird, Otto	1934-36, n.d.
b. 1, f. 6-7	Bishop, Elizabeth	1934-48, n.d.
b. 1, f. 8	Boyle, Kay	1932
b. 1, f. 9	Bridson, D. G.	1935
	Bryher See: Winifred Macpherson, Box 1, folder 47	
b. 1, f. 10	Campbell, Ruth E. (<i>The American Scholar</i>)	1937
b. 1, f. 11	Canby, Henry Seidel (<i>The Saturday Review</i>)	1932-33
b. 1, f. 12	College Poetry Society	1934
b. 1, f. 13	Cowden, R. W. (Hopwood Awards)	1939
b. 1, f. 14	Crane, Louise	1938, n.d.
b. 1, f. 15	Cross, Wilbur (<i>The Yale Review</i>)	1937
b. 1, f. 16	Cummings, E. E.	1935
b. 1, f. 17	Davis, Paul Bernard	n.d.
b. 1, f. 18	DeJong, David C.	1934
b. 1, f. 19	DeVoto, Bernard	1937
	DeVries, Peter See: Poetry, Box 1, folder 61	
	Dillon, George See: Poetry, Box 1, folder 61	
b. 1, f. 20-22	Dollinger, Verona Mae	1928-38, n.d.
b. 1, f. 23	Drummond, John	1934-35

b. 1, f. 24	Dupee, F. W.	1937, n.d.
b. 1, f. 25	Eberhart, Richard	1935
b. 1, f. 26	Eliot, T. S.	1934
b. 1, f. 27	England, Robert	1934-35
b. 1, f. 28	Fearing, Kenneth	n.d.
b. 1, f. 29	Fitzgerald, Robert	1934-35
b. 1, f. 30	Foerster, Norman	1935
b. 1, f. 31	Frost, Robert	n.d.
b. 1, f. 32-33	Ginsberg, Bernard M.	1934-37, n.d.
b. 1, f. 34-35	Gregory, Horace	1934-48
b. 1, f. 36	Hatfield, W. Wilbur	1936
b. 1, f. 37	Hays, H. R.	n.d.
b. 1, f. 38	Healy, J. V.	1935
	Herring, Robert See: <i>Life and Letters Today</i>, Box 1, folder 43	
b. 1, f. 39	Jenkins, Brooks	1938
b. 1, f. 40	Laughlin, James	1934-36, n.d.
b. 1, f. 41-42	Lazare, Christopher	1937-41, n.d.
b. 1, f. 43	<i>Life and Letters Today</i>	1937
b. 1, f. 44	Loveman, Amy	1933
b. 1, f. 45	McAfee, Helen	1937
b. 1, f. 46	Machen, Arthur	1938
b. 1, f. 47	Macpherson, Winifred	1935
b. 1, f. 48	Maddow, Ben	1934
b. 1, f. 49	Madge, Charles	1935
b. 1, f. 50	Magarat, Helene	1934
b. 1, f. 51	Mangan, Sherry	1934-35
b. 1, f. 52	Mann, Klaus (<i>Decision</i>)	1941
b. 1, f. 53	Monroe, Harriet	1932-35
b. 1, f. 54	Moore, Marianne	1934-50

b. 1, f. 55	Moses, W. R.	1935
b. 1, f. 56	Munro, Isabel R.	1934-36
b. 1, f. 57	Niedecker, Lorine	1935
b. 1, f. 58	Norman, Dorothy	1937-38
b. 1, f. 59	Oppen, George	n.d.
b. 1, f. 60	Patchen, Kenneth	n.d.
b. 1, f. 61	<i>Poetry</i> See also: Harriet Monroe, Box 1, folder 53 See also: Morton Zabel, Box 2, folder 90	
b. 1, f. 62	Porteus, Hugh Gordon	1935
b. 2, f. 63	Pound, Dorothy	1947
b. 2, f. 64-66	Pound, Ezra	1931-36
b. 2, f. 67	Prokosch, Frederic	n.d.
b. 2, f. 68	Rahv, Philip	1936
b. 2, f. 69	Rodman, Selden	1938
b. 2, f. 70	Ross, W. W. E.	1934-35
b. 2, f. 71	Rukeyser, Muriel	1934-39, n.d.
b. 2, f. 72	Schacht, Marshall	n.d.
b. 2, f. 73	Sherby, J. M.	1934
b. 2, f. 74	Sillen, Samuel	1937-38
b. 2, f. 75	Stephens, Pauline F.	1935
b. 2, f. 76	Stevens, Wallace	1934-35
b. 2, f. 77	Tate, Allen	1935-39
b. 2, f. 78	Taylor, Harold	1946
b. 2, f. 79	Todd, Ruthven	n.d.
b. 2, f. 80	Tyler, Parker	1935-38
b. 2, f. 81	Villa, Jose	1946
b. 2, f. 82	Warren, Robert Penn (<i>The Southern Review</i>)	1936
b. 2, f. 83	Wheelwright, John	1935, n.d.
b. 2, f. 84-85	Williams, William Carlos	1932-49

b. 2, f. 86	Wilson, Edmund	1931
b. 2, f. 87	Wilson family correspondence	1929-37
	Winslow, Anne See: College Poetry Society, Box 1, folder 12	
b. 2, f. 88	Winters, Yvor	1923
	Yaddo See: Elizabeth Ames, Box 1, folder 2	
b. 2, f. 89	Young, Kathleen Y.	1932
b. 2, f. 90	Zabel, Morton D.	1932-37
b. 2, f. 91	Zaturenska, Marya	1936-41, n.d.
b. 2, f. 92	Zevnik, E. F.	1939-42, n.d.
b. 2, f. 93	Zukofsky, Louis	1931-35, n.d.
b. 2, f. 94	Unidentified	1935-38, n.d.

Series II: Writings, 1934-47*0.75 linear feet (2 boxes)*

Series II, *Writings*, is arranged alphabetically by type of material (Essays, Notebooks, Notes, Poems, Poetry Notebooks, Projected Book of Criticism) and then alphabetically by title or subject within each category.

b. 3, f. 95-96	Essays	1931, 1937, n.d.
b. 3, f. 97-99	Notebooks	1945, n.d.
b. 3, f. 100-01	Notes	n.d.
b. 4, f. 102-07	Poems: uncollected	1935, 1947, n.d.
b. 4, f. 108-13	Poems: notebooks	1934-39, n.d.
b. 4, f. 114-16	Projected book of literary criticism	n.d.

Series III: Other Papers, 1933-41*0.25 linear feet (1 box)*

Series III, *Other Papers*, is arranged alphabetically in Box 5 by subject, with miscellaneous papers placed at the end of the series. Arrangement of the poems submitted to *Bozart-Westminster* anthology (folders 118-20) conforms to the order as presented in the anthology's table of contents.

b. 5, f. 117	<i>Bozart-Westminster</i> anthology	1935
b. 5, f. 118-20	Submissions to <i>Bozart-Westminster</i> anthology	1935
b. 5, f. 121	Poems by various authors	n.d.
b. 5, f. 122	Pound essays	1933, 1935
b. 5, f. 123-24	Miscellaneous papers	1935, 1941, n.d.

Restricted Fragile Papers

0.25 linear feet (1 box)

Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

CORRESPONDENCE

Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

b. 6, f. 125	Box 1, folders 32, 34, 35, 37, 42
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b. 6, f. 126	Box 2, folders 65, 73, 81, 83-85, 91
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WRITINGS

Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

b. 6, f. 127	Box 3, folder 95
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b. 6, f. 128	Box 3, folder 96
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b. 6, f. 129	Box 4, folders 102-104
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b. 6, f. 130	Box 4, folders 105-107
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Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Criticism
Editors
Literary style
Literature, Modern
Literature -- History and criticism
Poetry
Socialism and literature

Occupations

Authors
Critics
Poets

Names

Bishop, Elizabeth, 1911-1979
Canby, Henry Seidel, 1878-1961
Cross, Wilbur L. (Wilbur Lucius), 1862-1948
Cummings, E. E. (Edward Estlin), 1894-1962
Eberhart, Richard, 1904-2005
Eliot, T. S. (Thomas Stearns), 1888-1965
Fitzgerald, Robert, 1910-1985
Gregory, Horace, 1898-1982
Laughlin, James, 1914-1997
Monroe, Harriet, 1860-1936
Moore, Marianne, 1887-1972
Patchen, Kenneth, 1911-1972
Pound, Ezra, 1885-1972
Prokosch, Frederic, 1908-1989
Ross, W. W. E. (William Wrightson Eustace),
1894-1966
Rukeyser, Muriel, 1913-1980
Tate, Allen, 1899-1979
Williams, William Carlos, 1883-1963
Wilson, Edmund, 1895-1972
Wilson, T. C. (Theodore Carl), 1912-1950
Winters, Yvor, 1900-1968
Zabel, Morton Dauwen, 1901-1964
Zaturenska, Marya, 1902-1982
Zukovsky, Louis

Corporate Body

Yaddo (Artists' colony)