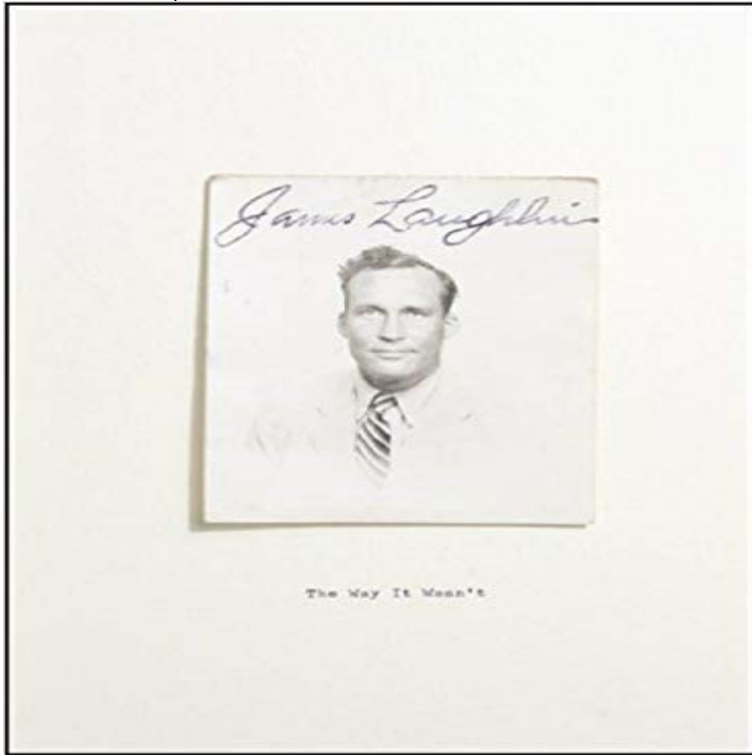


The Way It Wasnt: From the Files of James Laughlin



Lavishly illustrated, *The Way It Wasnt* offers an intimate firsthand encounter with 20th-century Modernism, from the extraordinary man who defined it for America. James Laughlin—poet, ladies man, heir to a steel fortune, and the founder of *New Directions*—was still at work on his autobiography when he died at 83. He left behind personal files crammed with memories and memorabilia: in *M* he is taking Marianne Moore to Yankee games (outings captured here in charming snapshots) to discuss arcane mammals, and in *N* nearly plunging off a mountain, hunting butterflies with Nabokov (Volya was a doll in a very severe upper-crust Russian way). With an accent on humor, *The Way It Wasnt* is a scrapbook loaded with ephemera—letters and memories, clippings and photographs. This richly illustrated album glitters like a magpie's nest, if a magpie could have known Tennessee Williams, W.C. Williams, Merton, Miller, Stein, and Pound. In *C*: I wish that nice Jean Cocteau were still around. He took me to lunch at the Grand Vefours in the Palais-Royal and explained all about flying saucers. He understood mechanical things. He would advise me. In *P*: There was not much gracious living in Pittsburgh, where at one house, the butler passed chewing gum on a silver salver after coffee. And: The world is full of a large number of irritating people. In *H* there's Lillian Hellman: What a raspy character. When I knocked at her door to try to borrow one of her books (hoping to butter her up) she only opened her door four inches and said words to the effect: Fuck off, you rapist. Marketing in *M*: I think it's important to get the troubadours into the title. That's a buy-me word. In *G*: Olga asked Allen Ginsberg if he was also buying Pound Conference T-shirts for his grandchildren. She was most lovable throughout. In *L*: Wyndham Lewis wrote Why don't you stop *New Directions*, your

