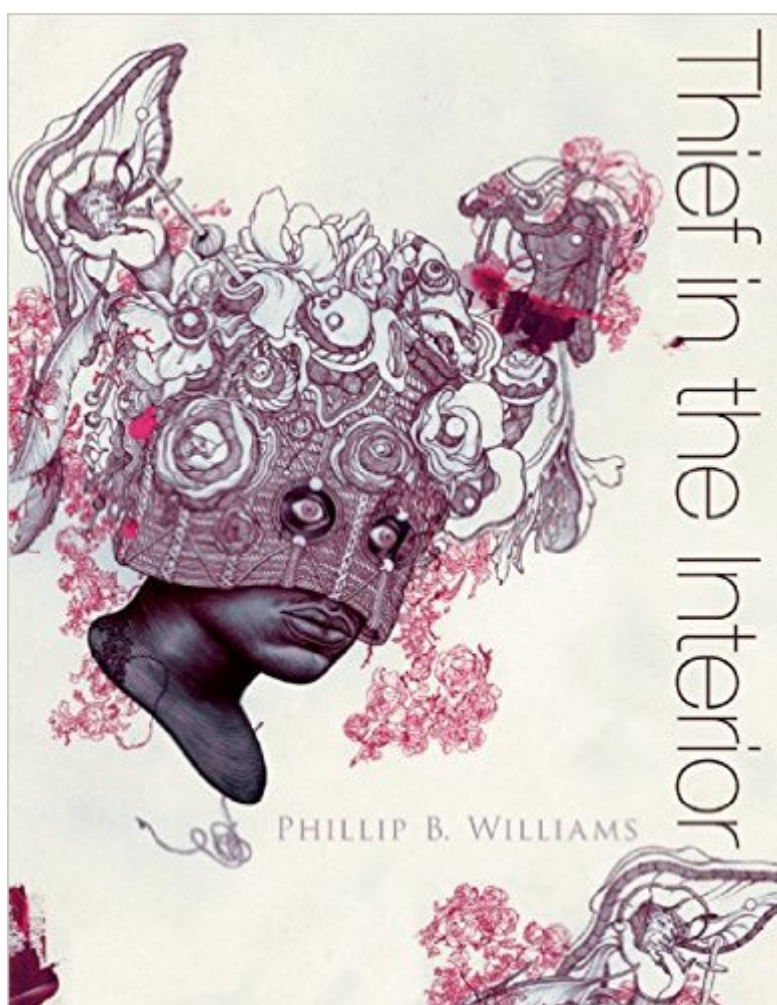


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Thief In The Interior



Synopsis

"This gorgeous debut is a 'debut' in chronology only. . . . Need is everywhere; in the unforgiving images, in lines so delicate they seem to break apart in the hands, and in the reader who will enter these poems and never want to leave." Adrian Matejka

Phillip B. Williams investigates the dangers of desire, balancing narratives of addiction, murders, and hate crimes with passionate, uncompromising depth. Formal poems entrenched in urban landscapes crack open dialogues of racism and homophobia rampant in our culture. Multitudinous voices explore one's ability to harm and be harmed, which uniquely juxtaposes the capacity to revel in both experiences.

"Epithalamium": A kiss. Train ride home from a late dinner, City Hall and document signing. Wasn't cold but we cuddled in an empty car, legal. Last month a couple of guys left a gay bar and were beaten with poles on the way to their car. No one called them faggot so no hate crime's documented. A beat down is what some pray for, a pulse left to count. We knew we weren't protected. We knew our rings were party favors, gold to steal the shine from. We couldn't protect us, knew the law wouldn't know how. Still, his beard across my brow, the burn of his cologne. When the train stopped, the people came on.

Phillip B. Williams has authored two chapbooks: *Bruised Gospels* (Arts in Bloom Inc.) and *Burn* (YesYes Books). A Cave Canem graduate, he received scholarships from Bread Loaf Writers Conference and a Ruth Lilly Fellowship. His work appeared or is forthcoming in *Callaloo*, *Poetry*, *the Southern Review*, *West Branch*, and others. Phillip received his MFA in Writing as a Chancellor's Graduate Fellow at the Washington University in St. Louis. He is the poetry editor of *Vinyl Poetry*.

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Customer Reviews

Williams takes on issues of race and violence with a lyric grace and innovative styling. The poems are unafraid and do not turn away from even the most difficult subjects. The fierceness comes close as a whisper and urges one to come in out of whatever other reality one might have been dawdling in. Williams sings a truth and though the song hurts, it is essential.

My poetry book club read Phillip B. Williams' *Thief in the Interior* for this month's meeting. The language and imagery of the collection are rich and consistent, while the poems themselves vary in strength (to my mind). It wasn't until the 10th poem that my attention was captured - actually the 2nd part of the 10th poem, called *Inheritance: Anthem*. The poem is centered (captured?) within a graphic circle, and describes in second person a young Black man's encounter with a white cop. My poetry book club read Phillip B. Williams' *Thief in the Interior* for this month's meeting. The language and imagery of the collection are rich and consistent, while the poems themselves vary in strength (to my mind). It wasn't until the 10th poem that my attention was captured - actually the 2nd part of the 10th poem, called *Inheritance: Anthem*. The poem is centered (captured?) within a graphic circle, and describes in second person a young Black man's encounter with a white cop. An all too familiar story in our times, but this quiet telling, this somber ending, make the story new. The book is divided into 4 unnamed sections, the second of which is perhaps the stand-out. Each poem in it touches on the story of Rashawn Brazell, a young man whose dismembered corpse was found in a duffel bag in Brooklyn. His head was missing. The most striking poem in this section is told from the point of view of the duffel bag that held Mr. Brazell's remains. Other sections focus on poems to the poet's dead father, poems to assorted lovers, and various dark cityscapes. The world of *Thief in the Interior* is one where a "javelin is honeyed in a gladiator's blood" and "high rises are pleated with suicides" (from *Door to a War I Never Knew*); where "the earth spins and we, utterly, are spun." (from *Of Contour, of Cadence*); where "the sickle moon turns the sky into a man's mouth slapped sideways" (from *Do-Rag*). It is a world as hard, and as shimmering, as a diamond. An all too familiar story in our times, but this quiet telling, this somber ending, make the story new. The book is divided into 4 unnamed sections, the second of which is perhaps the stand-out. Each poem in it touches on the story of Rashawn Brazell, a young man whose dismembered corpse was found in a duffel bag in Brooklyn. His head was missing. The most striking poem in this section is told from the point of view of the duffel bag that held Mr. Brazell's remains. Other sections focus on poems to the poet's dead father, poems to assorted lovers, and various dark cityscapes. The world of *Thief in the Interior* is one where a "javelin is honeyed in a gladiator's blood" and "high rises are pleated with suicides"

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