

THE VWS PRESENTS
C.K. WILLIAMS



t interesting thing about a poem is that it doesn't exist until it has its music. Every poem has a music. And until it has that, it's not a poem. It's just information or data that's floating around in your head or on your desk.”—C.K. Williams



Reading on Thursday, November 29th at 5:00 PM in the Library Auditorium. The event is free and open to the public. A book-signing with refreshments will follow. For more information contact Catie Rosemurgy at

rose@tcnj.edu

Contents

Biography (3)

Awards (4)

Bibliography (5)

Interview (6)

World Views (7)



Biography

C.K. Williams is an established American poet who has been presented with almost every major literary award in existence (including the Guggenheim Fellowship, National Book Award, and Pulitzer Prize). Williams is also a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a Chancellor of the American Academy of poets. He hails from Newark, NJ and currently teaches at Princeton University.

For more information about C.K. Williams see:

<http://www.ckwilliams.com/bio.html>



“To put it simply, C.K. Williams is a wonderful poet, in the authentic American tradition of Walt Whitman and William Carlos Williams, who tells us on every page what it means to be alive in our time.” —Stanley Kunitz

Awards



Guggenheim Fellowship (1974)



National Book Critics Circle Prize (1987)



National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship
(1985 and 1993)



Lila Wallace Fellowship (1993)



PEN Voelker Career Achievement Award in
Poetry (1998)



Berlin Prize in the American Academy (1998)



Pulitzer Prize (2000)



National Book Award (2003)

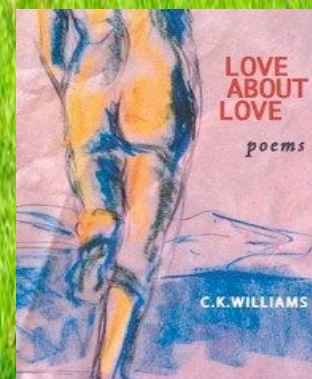
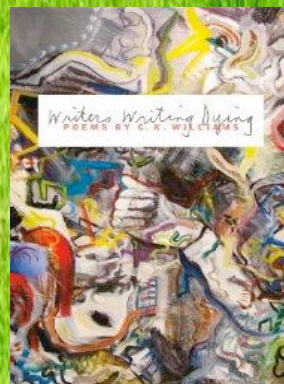
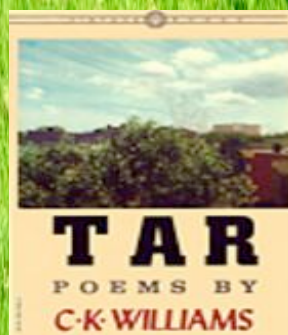
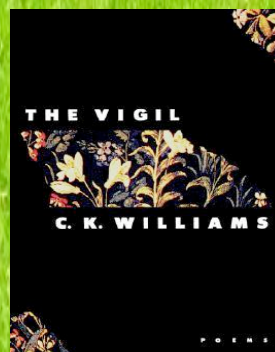
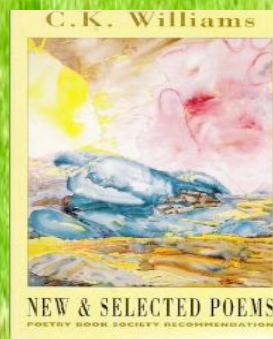
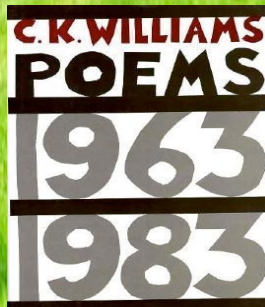
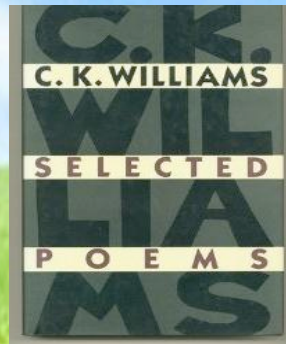
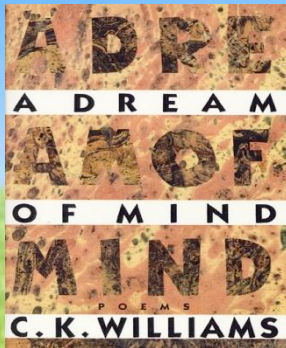
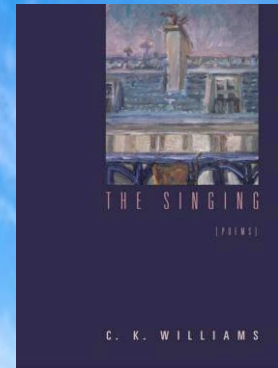
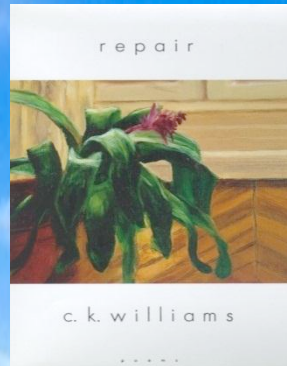


Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize (2005)

“My beginning in poetry was a great shock. I didn’t expect it; nobody else expected it. I was in Europe in a hotel room and reading T.S. Eliot of all people, and I just started reciting poetry.”—C.K. Williams



Bibliography



C.K. Williams Q & A

Q. How was your impression about winning that Pulitzer Prize?

A. Oh it was a great pleasure, I must say. It was, I had been a finalist twice before and didn't win it so in some ways it was kind of relief to win it but I enjoyed it very much.

Q. How did you feel being a finalist twice before?

A. Well, it feels you know, it's a little unreal until you actually get it. So, being a finalist doesn't have a great deal of tension about it and when you get it you think, oh, I may have been more tense than I realized.

Q. How much does conscience play a very important role in your decisions that you took in terms of playing a subliminal role and so forth? Where does conscience actually falter? Does it falter at any given point in the life of a poet?

A. Does conscience falter? I guess conscience falters every day, fortunately. If we lived in a state of excruciating conscience twenty-four hours a day, it's hard enough to sleep as it is. I think that every time, at least every time I sit down to write a poem, there is an engagement with conscience. For instance, a few years ago, I realized one summer that every poem I had been writing was about global warming. Every single poem. They weren't poems that were mostly finished and I realized that, I had to get hold of things more. You can't do that—it's too limiting to get stuck in one rut that way, no matter even, no matter how crucial a rut it can be, and so I had to go back to the other ways of thinking, bringing the world into my poetry.

Q. What you're saying here is even consciousness actually has a filter and the filter is rationalizing the merit of your doing?

A. You're saying consciousness or conscience? Conscience has no filter; conscience has a memory that is only so great. Like a computer, its memories can fill up simply and you can't drive it anymore. Then you become a propagandist and that's one of the dangers for activist poets is to become a propagandist 'cause propagandist poetry is never very good poetry.

World Views



[On Poetry and the Iraq War:](#) “We’ll never really know what drove them to have that war... I think in some ways it was sheer arrogance. It was a sheer belief that if you have power, you have to express it, or you can express it, and I think that came out pretty clearly. There’s a huge amount of political writing in our time, and there’s a huge amount being heard. Whether that means anything or not is another question. You don’t know. There’s this fusion in history between moments when people can hear, just like ‘Cassandra,’ when people can hear what’s being said and what’s urgent, and when they can’t, and you can’t predict, you can’t know when the times are that people will hear what they’re supposed to be hearing or should be hearing.”



[Race, Identity, and Politics and Poetry:](#) “I don’t believe that racism of one sort or another is curable. I think it’s always something that’s there for people who need it to use it, whether it’s racism or anti-Semitism, or anti-Catholicism, anti-Immigration. There are people for whom that will always give them some kind of sustenance, and I think part of the problem is we think we can do away with that and we can’t, and I think also that part of the problem is that we ask ourselves to cure ourselves. I think that there are still elements of racism in anyone, anyone no matter how much they believe they overcome it, it’s still there...”



[Writing a Poem - How Do You Do It?:](#) “You start with a fragment, a sound, sometimes you start with an image, with an idea, but the most important thing is the sound. You have to get the sound of the poem, the music of the poem I call it, and until you have that you don’t have anything. And that’s the hardest part is waiting for the music and the matter to come together because sometimes it can take many years to come together. Sometimes it can never - I have some poems in my files that I’ve had there for thirty years... I still keep them just in case a miracle happens.”