



IAN WILLIAMS

Poem, "Hair is Choking the Drain," p. 55

"People think of Blackness as being uniform, but a Black American is not the same as a Black African or a Black West Indian or a Black Canadian. If

you look at a bunch of hair in a shower drain, how do you distinguish whose it is—who's the rich one, who's the poor one, who's the American, who's the African, who's the maid, who's the employer? When do our differences matter and when don't they?"

Ian Williams's first novel, Reproduction, will be published in January.

Hair is Choking the Drain

BY IAN WILLIAMS

Someone should clean it,
the drain in the tub and the drain in the sink,
with a hairpin or a paperclip or a finger. Not *it*.
Clean them.

My friend
in Africa has a cleaning lady. They are both Black.
He tidies up a little before she arrives. Not too
much. Not to repeat myself. They are both Black.
Just a little. Because. Shall I go on?
And he doesn't make her doesn't ask her to
fold his laundry because his underwear
something about touching his. He told me
(but I forget) that he came home one afternoon
and found her taking a shower in his it goes
without saying in his bathroom. There's no
hot water where she lives. And she's been drinking
his bottled water. There's that.

So anyway so now
there are plot-developing tensions between them
that can't be addressed because she's you
know and some of the hair in the drain could be hers.