Dear Reader,

You hold in your hands the result of a year's worth of planning, preparation, and creativity. This year marks a departure for Perceptions and her sister publication, hoi polloi. Not only do the magazines have new staffs, but both formats have been re-designed to reflect their kinship. Painstaking care has been taken to bring you the finest poetry, fiction, and visual art that Gainesville College has to offer. This issue offers two new features that we hope will become traditions: an interview with a literary notable and a review of that author's latest work. Our first featured writer is poet Miller Williams.

It has been my great pleasure to have worked with an enthusiastic and talented group of artists, writers, and planners during the birth of Perceptions '93. I would especially like to thank Mr. Tom Sauret and Ms. Anne Bessac for their guidance and forbearance throughout the project. On behalf of the English Club, I would also like to express our gratitude to the judges of the Art and Writing competitions: Cheryl Goldsleger of Piedmont College, Carol Wilson of Lander University, Richard Patteson and Price Caldwell, both of Mississippi State University. Finally, many thanks to Erdine Donovan, Janice Nylander, Dr. Sallie Duhling, Dr. Thomas Tuggle, Anne Stiehm, and Belinda Sauret for their priceless assistance in proofing and copying.

We at Perceptions hope that you will enjoy this collection as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Paul Hodo
Gainesville College
April 1993

contents

the poseurs 5
paul hodo

the system according to mr. bubba johnson 10
georgann lanich
dawn 12
translated by dana nichols

the night on black island 13
translated by dana nichols

i.c.b.m. inter-continental ballistic monkey 14
ty burgess

the lounge 15
ty burgess

the long journey home 16
barbara anne thomas

an interview with miller williams 19
georgann lanich

a gallery of visual art 27
en las afueras 43
deanne gunter

the metro cafe 44
paul hodo
tanktown 46
paul hodo

is it a poem yet? 47
michael holloway
This is how it usually goes. I'm standing nude in front of a roomful of mostly Grandma Moses wannabes. In a class of twelve, only one woman is my age. She's a mousy, please-God-let-me-be-an-artist type. You know. Tight-assed. Anyhow, I run through some one-minute prelims and then I set up the first long pose. Kind of a David who-gives-a-crap stance that's easy to hold for forty-five minutes or more. I make sure to point my best side at Mousey, who has developed a hectic flush across her mildly blemished forehead. Carmen, the instructor, starts my timer and we settle in.

Like I said, this class is a carbon copy of all the others. There is always a variety of frumpy-chic women with names like Twylla and Phaedra, and a handful of aging gays fighting over a space in the crotch quadrant of the studio. Hey, it's a job. The money isn't great, but it's enough to allow me to pursue other interests. I make my own hours and I have no trouble blissing out while I sit. The only hassles are having to shave the bod and grease up for the plaster-casters, or double-posing with another model who smells funny. Carmen is a friend and she keeps me in groceries. A fortyish woman of legendary size, she claims to have posed a few times herself. I've developed a gut of my own, over the years, but the idea of this babe unfettered is just too extreme.

I slide my gaze ever so slightly to check up on Mousey. She sits at her easel, her right arm extended, sizing me up with the tip of her charcoal. She wears a calf-length denim skirt and has her knees spread, as though
she's about to be handed a cello. When she notices that I'm watching, she has a little seizure and snaps her charcoal. She fumbles for another piece. I can't help laughing. A little. She cuts her glance, then slowly looks back. A quirky smile scoots across her lips! So maybe "Mousey" isn't a fair assessment. She does have big, pretty eyes. Her hair is kind of nifty and disarranged. And who knows what she might be like underneath that baggy sweatshirt?

"Yeah? Who cares?"

In this business, you gotta keep your mind off of the ladies because, if you get carried away, the pose is shot and you don't get paid. So, I shut my eyes and list the Presidents until the timer buzzes for a break.

It's standard practice, during a break, to work the crowd. If the students find you charming, it can mean a hefty tip or even some private posing. There's some real money in that. So, I wander from easel to easel, sharing happy-talk and checking out the talent. Some of these old harpies just kill me. Some do a quick sketch of my whole body and then give me the gear you'd expect to find on a Japanese pillowing card. Others, proper little grannies that they are, have me looking like a slightly frazzled Ken doll. Now, I approach Mousey's easel but just before I get around behind her she flips the cover over her pad and goes off to talk with Carmen. A few minutes later, we both arrive at the coffee machine. I tighten the sash on my robe and let her go first. She turns to me.

"Cream?" she asks.

"How's that?" Ever the master of the witty comeback.

"Do you like cream...in your coffee?"

"Oh! Sure. Thanks, just a little."

She carefully adds a plop of cream to each cup and then hands one to me.

"Chloe. My name, that is. Chloe Roudabush," she says and thrusts out her free hand. I take it and introduce myself.

"You have an interesting job. It's nice to...well, we rarely have a male model to pose for us."

"There're not that many of us in this neck of the woods, but the fewer the competitors, the more work for me."

"Well, you do a fine job." She pauses and bites her lip.

"Listen, I've got to ask you. How do..."

Right then, one of the old guys joins us. His name is Monty or something. He has lily-white hair and wears a black turtleneck and black trousers. Monty never wears pants; he always wears trousers.

"Chloe, dear! Isn't it just exquisite to have something new to draw? Vive la difference!" He turns to me and hands me a piece of paper with a phone number on it. "A few of us are getting together for a private class at my home in Buckhead on Saturday evening. We'd love to have you pose for us. Won't you ring me sometime this week and let me know?"

As he passes the paper, he gives my hand a little squeeze. Sure, I think.

The same day you read in the paper that Hell froze over.

"Oh! Carmen is calling," he chirps. "Back to the stage you go. Do call!" He turns and sashays back to his easel. Carmen is motioning for class to resume. Mousey...Chloe grabs my arm as we walk back to the circle.

"I wanted to ask you. How..."

"Yes?"

"Well, don't you ever get an erect...what I mean is, how do you keep from..."

"How do I keep from getting...aroused?"

"Urn hmm." She is blushing to beat Jesus.

"Well, when the urge hits me, I just play little mind games 'til it goes away." This is the truth. A boner is the death of a model's career. It is widely accepted that an art class is not the place to showcase one's...what's the word?...tumescence. Maybe that's why there are so few males in the business. It can happen once, but after that you're on report as a high risk. If it happens twice, you're looking for work.

It has never happened to me.

I plant my feet on the tapes. The rest of my body remembers the pain of the pose and naturally returns to it. However, Carmen waves me to "at ease."

"Tonight we have a rare treat. For our long pose, we will have two models! Our friend here will be joined by one of our own who is fulfilling the role of the mystery guest will be. I look over at Monty. He's beaming like a monkey on a banana boat.

"Aw shit, Miss Agnes! No way! Carmen, wreathed in smiles, continues, "For the next hour our models will execute what is known as..." She is the ringmaster about to introduce Gunther Gebel-Williams. "...THE POSE!" The class goes apeshit. I nearly pass out. THE POSE is a classic two-person form. One model sits, Indian-style, on the dais while the other straddles him, face to face. Both models then embrace each other and stretch backward as far as possible. It is a mock-coital position that sounds painful, but is deceptively easy to hold due to counter-balance. BUT...you usually do it with someone you know and ALWAYS with a member of the opposite sex, for crissake! The idea of that nelly old geezer touching me freezes my gonads. How much did he pay Carmen to pull this off? But, Monty hasn't moved. I look around the room as Carmen winds up the class to resume. Mousey...Chloe grabs my arm as we walk back to the circle.

"I wanted to ask you. How..."

"Yes?"

"Well, don't you ever get an erect...what I mean is, how do you keep from..."

"How do I keep from getting...aroused?"

"Urn hmm." She is blushing to beat Jesus.

"Well, when the urge hits me, I just play little mind games 'til it goes away." This is the truth. A boner is the death of a model's career. It is widely accepted that an art class is not the place to showcase one's...what's the word?...tumescence. Maybe that's why there are so few males in the business. It can happen once, but after that you're on report as a high risk. If it happens twice, you're looking for work.

It has never happened to me.

I plant my feet on the tapes. The rest of my body remembers the pain of the pose and naturally returns to it. However, Carmen waves me to "at ease."

"Tonight we have a rare treat. For our long pose, we will have two models! Our friend here will be joined by one of our own who is fulfilling the role of the mystery guest will be. I look over at Monty. He's beaming like a monkey on a banana boat.

"Aw shit, Miss Agnes! No way! Carmen, wreathed in smiles, continues, "For the next hour our models will execute what is known as..." She is the ringmaster about to introduce Gunther Gebel-Williams. "...THE POSE!" The class goes apeshit. I nearly pass out. THE POSE is a classic two-person form. One model sits, Indian-style, on the dais while the other straddles him, face to face. Both models then embrace each other and stretch backward as far as possible. It is a mock-coital position that sounds painful, but is deceptively easy to hold due to counter-balance. BUT...you usually do it with someone you know and ALWAYS with a member of the opposite sex, for crissake! The idea of that nelly old geezer touching me freezes my gonads. How much did he pay Carmen to pull this off? But, Monty hasn't moved. I look around the room as Carmen winds up the big intro.

"Ladies and gentlemen, for the first time anywhere..." The door to the restroom opens. "I take great pride in presenting..." The only light in the room comes from the spots over my head. "...Chloe Roudabush!"
holding her big sweatshirt in front of her. She walks to the stage, eyes down. She carefully lays her shirt next to my robe. So...so beautiful! A precious, flawless little figure. Dear God. I reach down to help her and a tingle begins just south of my navel. She has chill-bumps and shivers a little smile. I sit cross-legged and draw her down to me. I swear to God, I hear “Unchained Melody” playing somewhere. She sits down in her little nook and I feel her warmth. Somewhere on Mars, Carmen calls the beginning of the pose. Reflexively, I settle myself. Chloe does the same. Her bottom lip quivers and her eyes are still downcast. I shift into overdrive.

Washington, Adams, Jefferson...to myself.

Her breasts are perfect and symmetrical, like little Hostess cupcakes.

In 1963, Whitey Ford led the Yankees to a two-game win over the Washington Senators in a twi-night doubleheader at D.C. Stadium. I had a hot dog and a Coke. Dad had peanuts.

A wispy trail leads from her navel down to where our pubic hair mingles.

I'm sorry to have to tell you this, sir. But, everyone you ever knew and cared about was hit by a speeding bus and killed. You will have to identify the bodies.

It's working. Thank you, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. And all the ships at sea. I'm gonna be just fine.

Then Chloe, at last, raises her eyes and we look at each other. I see what I hadn't seen before. What I didn't need to see. Freckles. Goddamn freckles.

Aw, Jeez man. This ain't fair! I cannot take my eyes off of her face. There they sit, like dust from some moth's wings. I feel it start at the base of my spine. Chloe smiles that sweet little smile.

Four-score and seven years ago, our Fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation...

It runs down the crack of my ass and up the other side.

The area of a circle is measured as pi times the radius squared. The Pythagorean Theorem is described as $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$.

Chloe's mouth forms a little O and her eyebrows arch wildly.

“Oh my!” she breathes.

“Call me Ishmael!” I do not mean for this to come out, but it does. Time, as they say, loses all meaning. My peripheral vision fails me. All I can see is her face. That cute little nose. And those damned freckles.

O.K. That's it!

Carmen. I'm busted. Chloe offers a throaty “huh?”

“That's it, guys. Time's up. God, you really do zone out, don't you? But Chloe, babe. You're a pro!”

Time's up? No way.

Slowly, Chloe begins to unfold herself from my lap. Oh swell!

Here it comes.

ARTIST'S MODEL ARRESTED AFTER PRODUCING HIS UNIT IN PUBLIC; CLAIMS FRECKLES HIS UNDOING....DON'T MISS THE NEXT "OPRAH."

My legs are wobbly as I get to my feet. I try to keep myself pointed away from the students, but find that they have pulled in close on all sides. Well, it was nice while it lasted. I make a mental note to hit the want-ads first thing tomorrow. There's a moment of silence, then...applause?

“That was terrific!”

“Never seen anything like it!”

“It was like a living statue.”

And...

“Just forget about Saturday evening, fella.” They all head for the coffee machine while Chloe and I stand there. I look down...parade rest.

There is a God! Carmen walks by.

“Same time next week, you two?”

“Sure thing, Carmen,” I say. “It’s been a slice of heaven, as usual.”

Carmen smiles. Chloe smiles. I smile. Everybody smiles. The world is a damned happy place. Chloe and I cover up.

“Hey, you didn't get to finish your piece. May I see what you did get?”

“Oh, I was finished with mine before the break.” She flips the cover off of her pad. I walk around to see.

Chloe and me...THE POSE.

“My, my, my. You are amazing. Doing anything for dinner?”

“And don't get to finish your piece. May I see what you did get?”

Later, we repeat THE POSE. For nobody but ourselves.

“You know, you nearly cost me my brilliant career.”

She laughs. Those freckles! I hold her.

“Call me Ishmael?” she asks.
Sit down here a minute
Let's us have a talk
(she's the cutest thing!)
I know you're all upset,
and I thought
I'd take this opportunity
to clear up a point
or two.

Now,
College got you full of ideas
All that book learnin'.
(Shes don't need no books
for making babies and dinner.)
And we all like that, just fine.
Don't get me wrong.

But, the boys,
you've worked here a long time.
You need to remember that and
Keep your sense of humor.
(and proper place.)

A little joke don't mean nothin'.
Haven't you ever been told
that's just how men are.
(How does she expect
to ever find a husband
to take care of her
if she don't know that?)
Why, it don't mean
nothin'.

That's how it is.
You'll have to learn
not to get mad.
If you wasn't pretty
or sexy
or blonde
you wouldn't be causing
so much trouble.

You are new and
I know
that you didn't
mean to stir up problems.
Go on back to your desk,
file some invoices,
type a memo,
pull some coffee on,
and you'll do fine.
dawn

federico garcia lorca
translated by dana nichols

But like the love,
the archers
are blind.
In the green night
the arrows
leave stubble tracks of hot
iris.
The keel of the moon
breaks purple clouds
and the quivers
it fills with dew.
Ah, but like the love,
the archers
are blind!

the night on black island

pablo neruda
translated by dana nichols

Ancient night and salt confusion
blow the walls of my house:
alone is the shadow, the heaven
is now one beat of the ocean.
and heaven and shadow burst
with the noise of excessive combat:
all of the night, fight.
nobody knows the weight
of the cruel brightness that opens oneself
as a clumsy fruit:
so born on the shore.
of the furious shadow, the last dawn,
biting through the salt in movement,
sweeping through the weight of the night,
staining with blood your marine crater.
i.c.b.m. inter-continental ballistic monkey

ty burgess

left bank primate
launched from the fringes
goin ballistic
riding missile infinity
into bohemia

it's retaliation
for all those
who've died
from exposure to
the culture of hollow tribes
their only ritual
is regret
it's the agony of lacking sensation

Incoming monkey!!
wearing a
purple funk beret
he's goin down
laughing
smoking 8 fat j's
he's gonna have his way
w/ the end of the world
she's easy
no commitment
and in the morning
its
all
gone
for
good

the lounge

ty burgess

the room is all corners
thick w/ L.A atmosphere
the room is all caterpillars
not a butterfly in the bunch

it is a construct
of polluted outcasts
who have been diverted
to dirty glass enclaves
there they climb the walls
like reptiles
bathing in their ostracized sun
like reptiles
cold-blooded
and
desperate

in this room I'm floating
in the toxic vapors of mindlessness
in this room I'm drowning
in the malignant rivers
of whiskey and green water

dwelling here
is forever.
so I bought
the world
from a madman
for 20 bucks
and a half-pint
and
it was
a damn
good
deal
the long journey home

barbara anne thomas

"Lord, I’m weary
Brokenhearted
Hear the screams, Lord
Their moaning
Whole brigades obliterated
Hear me, Lord
Give me sleep, Sweet Jesus
Shut my mind
Close my ears
Give me peace, I pray
Dear Jesus
Soon it will be day"

It’s early dawn
Just before light
Slowly the wagons begin to move
First the wounded
Then the prisoners
Wagons stretch for miles
The journey home long and tedious
The mood quiet and somber
No joyous thoughts abound of past glories
Thoughts are taken with the last few days
The carnage of the long battle
Memory consumed with mangled bodies littering the battlefield
So numerous
As if a canopy covering the ground
Friends and foes alike
Forever a part of the blood-soaked soil

Slowly the wagons grind and squeak
The wounded screaming
Begging for something
Too delirious to know for what
Onward
Toward home
Virginia
That blessed land
She calls to me

We came to this foreign soil
Eager to conquer
Invincible we thought
So we believed
Nothing too great to ask
Some barefoot and ragged
We offered all
We screamed and yelled
Fought like demons
Shoulder to shoulder
Saber to saber
We approached enemy lines in formation
Their guns waiting for slaughter

Wave after human wave
We came
Only to be slaughtered
Upon that sacrificial altar—
The Cause

Pickett was crying
Last I heard
His brigades massacred
His need for glory unassuaged
The gray-haired master sought to calm
Assuming all guilt, all blame
For the massive defeat
Only now to realize
The need for the Invincible One
Silenced forever in that thicket where the Wilderness lies

So now Sweet Lady
I’m homeward bound
Come to me
Perceptions-- What do you look for when you are looking at a student poem or any poem for that matter? What makes a poem successful?

Miller Williams-- The first thing I look for when I read a poem is a sense of direction—a beginning, a middle, and an end. I’m looking for a shape. A poem should start at one place, move through a pattern, and end at another place. It should be resolved. By resolved, I mean that the last line...
should not leave you with the expectation of another line. It is the business of every line in a poem to leave you in expectation of a line to follow with the exception of the last line. By resolution in poetry, we mean to change the reader's expectation of something to follow to that of nothing to follow.

I then ask myself what the denotative meaning of the poem is. I don't mean that the poem should all be on the surface, but there should be a surface to stand on, to start with, and to dig under.

Does the reader know enough so it is a satisfactory experience. Sometimes-- there is a good deal "off the page."

Perceptions-- Can you share some do's and don'ts for young poets?

MW-- I'll talk about negatives because they're more useful.

What we most often find wrong in the work of poets who have little experience is that they write down language in a diction that people haven't used in one or two hundred years. They write as if they're trying to be Wordsworth or Keats. The poetry of any time has been written in the language of the conversation of the poet's day. Not the written language of the poet's day, but the language of talk. It's not really talk. It's an illusion of conversation.

There is also what I call a sincerity contract, an emotional or sympathetic contract between the author and the reader. I don't care if the poet believes it; I feel that he believes it when I read the poem. A bad sincere poem isn't much. Like a greeting card. But a poem that's on its way to being something will never become anything unless the reader is convinced, unless the reader says yes with the heart as well as the head.

A poem shouldn't show off. It should be a convincing illusion of talk. I don't like poems that say, "Guess what I mean?" and I don't like poems that say, "Look what I know."

Perceptions-- What about rhyme? When should a poet use it?

MW-- You may use rhyme, along the way, just to make the reading of a poem richer for the ear, or to suggest, now and then that there is something formal or elegiac or particularly serious about a passage. Rhyme works best when the words belong to one another rhetorically as well as phonically. It doesn't matter if it's intended or not; once you see it, you keep it.

Rhyme is part of the game of the poem; it's part of the form that the poem's statement pushes against, trying to get free.

Perceptions-- What about subjects? What should poetry be about?

MW-- All art is about human beings.

Robert Frost has a little poem called "The Span of Life." Two lines. I imagine that the poet is sitting in a cabin out in the woods when a possum runs across the porch and his old dog goes "ruff." The poem goes:

The old dog barked backward without getting up
I can remember when he was a pup.

It's not about the dog anymore. It means that I can remember a lot of things that were different once. The poem becomes the man's poem. The dog was only a way of getting into it.

Perceptions-- What do you think of poetic trends? We spend time in class discussing the current trend of contemporary poetry, and that you have some do's and some don't's, if you are going to follow the trend. How do you feel about that?

MW-- I don't know. I've heard of a couple of fashions, but I don't pay any attention to them. I don't think you can ever do a good job at anything if you pay much attention to the fashion. Trends come and go too fast; as history moves on, they come and go faster and faster. I wouldn't know how to write a trendy poem anyway. You'd have to tell me what the trends are.
Perceptions—Like the idea that political poetry isn’t in fashion. I didn’t realize that and wrote one. I’m glad I didn’t know about the trend before I wrote it or I would have skipped over the idea.

MW—That’s nonsense. It’s true that there is a pressure toward the politically correct in poetry as there is in everything else, and I would say there is some pressure to write more socially engaged poetry, but you can’t sit down and say, “I’m going to write a socially engaged poem.” I don’t think a good poem was ever written by anyone who sat down and said, “I’m going to write a poem of 14 lines, with an xaxa rhyme scheme, about my mother and her dog.” You start out (at least with everybody I know; we talk about this a lot) ... you sit down to write and you start scribbling ideas and images and you realize, maybe, when you’re almost completely through, what it’s about. Every poem I write provides its own form. I don’t know what form it’s going to be, or how long it’s going to be. I may have an idea about what it’s going to be, but it usually turns out to be about something else.

I have a poem about a book that I thought was a beautiful book. It looked leather bound, I thought. But I was told that it was bound in human skin. It was found in the bunker of a Nazi officer. It had blank pages; it was a sketch book, a notebook, and I realized that this might become a poem, if I could handle it. But I never sat down to write that poem. One day, about three years later, I was just writing some lines as they came to me, and some images. And Jordan, my wife, said, “That’s about the book isn’t it?” And that’s what it’s called: “The Book.”

Perceptions—What should happen at the end of a poem?

MW—Set down a mirror. Let the reader see herself or himself there.

Perceptions—Do you always know what a line is going to say before you write?

MW—Someone once said to Robert Frost, in my presence, “Mr. Frost, did you really intend this trick?” that somebody had been praising him for. Frost said,

“Doesn’t matter! Anything found in the poem belongs to the poet!”

And I think that’s true. There are a lot of fortunate accidents. Take credit for them. But you have to be able to recognize them.

Perceptions—When do you know when a poem is finished?

MW—A lot of times one person thinks a kiss is over and the other doesn’t. One pulls away a little before the other one. Tomorrow they may change places; it depends on what that kiss is for.

I remember a story my father used to tell. He was a minister and he trained ministers and he talked to them about preaching, especially when to shut up, how you can ruin everything by going just a little too far. He told the story of a prosecutor who was questioning the little daughter of a defendant to try to attack the credibility of her father. He said, “Did your daddy tell you what to say when you got up here?” She said, “Yes, sir.” “Did he tell you precisely what to say?” “Yes, sir.” “Did he leave you any choice about what to say?” “No, sir.” He should have turned around and walked away and said, “No more questions,” but he said, “What did he tell you to say?” “He told me to say the truth.”

The whole case was out the window. He asked just one question too many. It’s a parable, but I think it’s a parable to carry with us.

How do you know when you have brushed your hair long enough? There’s nothing mysterious about it; but sometimes you’re wrong.

Sometimes the poem is not finished and sometimes you should have stopped three drafts back. This is why every poet I know shows his or her poems to other poets. I wouldn’t ever let a poem go without showing it to some poet that I respect and saying, “What do you think?” We workshop them.
Perceptions— Who workshops your poems?

MW— I'm almost afraid to say because they're all dead. John Corrington, Robert Lowell, Howard Nemerov, John Ciardi were all faithful readers of my work and honest critics.

Perceptions— So the image of the published poet sitting at his desk, shooting out pieces of finished poetry, with the first draft, is a myth?

MW— I've never even heard the myth.

Perceptions— Well, it exists. Beginning writers have this image of successful poets sitting at the word processor producing finished pieces of work, ready for the publisher with their first attempt.

MW— Even magazine publication, for me, and with most poets I know, is just another draft because when you see it in the magazine, you get a perspective on it that you don't have when it's typed. When it's typed, you have perspective you didn't have when it was handwritten. Every form in which it can exist lets you see warts that you didn't see before. Almost every poem I have is a little different from the way it appeared in a literary journal. A number of the poems that are in my "New and Selected Poems" are different from how they existed in the original books in which they were published.

By convention we accept the poet's last published version as the way the poet wants it to be, though sometimes the poet can mess up. I can think of poems by John Corrington and Marianne Moore that were better before they revised them for that last book. But time will take care of that. In 50 or 100 years, if the poems are remembered, the anthologists will include the versions they want.

Perceptions— Where did you get the idea for Lazarus in "Adjusting to the Light"?

MW— You know, they didn't ask Him to bring Lazarus back. He just decided to do it. Think of anybody you've lost, who had been dead four days, and then think about how survivors were beginning to reorient their lives. Imagine the person coming back to life. Stuff has been given away; the Salvation Army has gotten everything; the dog is gone.

Perceptions— I loved the last line the best, though: "We'll put your room the way it was before."

MW— All of this is Biblical. I mean, everything that they had. They were an upper-middle-class family. He would have had a lyre and such. They would have been on the level of the sandal maker, a guild merchant. But, also, they said that Mary... the sister Mary... said to Jesus, when they spoke to him, "He had been dead four days and he stinketh." Decay was already beginning to set in. So, I didn't invent the stink; that's part of it. And a great crowd gathered around, cause you didn't see that everyday. It must have happened something like that.

Perceptions— Lazarus doesn't seem very happy about being resurrected.

MW— I mean, in his position, he would think, well, I feel kind of bad about coming back. Imagine having to die twice. He doesn't want to go through that twice.

The food was delivered, and the discussion became even more informal and relaxed as the interview regretfully slowed to its conclusion.

Perceptions— I want to know about your children, about your family. How many children do you have?

MW— Three—35, 37, and 39.

Perceptions— When they were younger, or even now, how do they react to what you do? Did they ever want to grow up to be poets?

MW— No, they want to do what they want to do. The younger girl is a nurse, with three children. The boy, in the middle, is a jazz piano player in New Orleans. He also has three children. His wife is a plant pathologist for the federal government. My older daughter is a singer/songwriter.
Perceptions-- What kind of music?

MW-- Country blues. We found her record yesterday under pop/rock. They have a little bit of trouble deciding where she goes...what category she fits in to. It's a crossover. This week's Village Voice, if you know that newspaper in New York, has a full page on her. My wife takes Vogue and Mirabella and this month when she opened them up, there was our daughter's picture with a story. It's kind of fun to see that happening. Now, she's on tour with her bus and her band, working her way down the East Coast.

Perceptions-- What's her name?

MW-- Lucinda Williams.

It was time for Mr. Williams to finish his lunch, gather his hat and coat, and take the drive to the airport. The students and faculty who shared lunch with Mr. Williams will not soon forget his intelligence, wit, and kindness.

first prize
lee wells
oil paint
20" x 18"
second prize
alan burger
photograph
6" x 9"

third prize
chad mcduffie
charcoal
14" x 20"
on sweet plum blossoms
the sun rises suddenly.
look, a mountain path.
haiku
chuck groves
computer graphics
8" x 10"

gloria king
styrofoam
30" x 30"
rita king
clay sculpture
10" x 7" x 4"

runner up
michael migliore
chalk
11" x 13"
Jonathan Vinson
Collage
24" x 36"
alan holcomb
charcoal drawing
19" x 13"

gloria king
ceramic vase
12" x 4"
chris brady
pen & ink
9" x 12"

runner up

student choice

jonathan vinson
chalk drawing
17" x 23"
Hearing the steady hum and rumble
Which makes me stay in my seat
I am relaxed.
The early morning is cool
However, the sun is hot
Later baking my shoulders
Making me look somewhat
like a native.
By the windows
scenery unchanged, until
my breath catches
at the huge monstrosity
Looming up
Smooth and stacked
Causing me to imagine
Walking up onto the roof
Peering over
And shouting to your neighbor,
five feet below.
I gaze
At the huge domain
Longing to stop
And wander inside
To ask questions, so many
In a foreign tongue.
the metro cafe

paul hodo

It's seven A.M. on a Saturday morning.
She lights her first smoke of the day.
She hangs up her purse on a nail by the jukebox
and picks up her notepad and tray.
She looks at herself in the cracked washroom mirror
and spies the first traces of gray.
It's opening time and business as usual
down at the Metro Cafe.

She stares down the street at the old Greyhound depot
and the bus that is bound for L.A.
She's promised herself, since the day she turned twenty,
that she would be on it someday.
For a five-dollar tip and a nod from a stranger,
she'd let this old town blow away,
'cause she's losing her dreams and feels like
she's dying here,
down at the Metro Cafe.

A sweet-faced old man who only had coffee
gets up from the booth by the door.
He smiles, then he nods as he hands her his ticket
and hesitates one moment more.
He says that it's sad to see such a rare beauty
just wasting her morning this way.
Will she take this five dollars and do something different
far from the Metro Cafe?

She grabs up her purse and runs for the depot,
afraid that she might change her mind.
The bus pulls away and she cries, unbelieving.
She's taken her big chance this time.

It's seven A.M. and a year or so later,
she lights her first smoke of the day.
She picks up her purse and pays at the counter.
Tonight she'll be home in L.A.
She looks down the street at the dusty old depot
where all of her dreams came alive.
Then she stops at the door, goes back to the counter,
and leaves the young waitress a five.

An old man just smiles as he thumbs through his paper
and sips his first cup of the day.
It's opening time and business as usual
down at the Metro Cafe.
tanktown

Paul Hodo

Sixty miles outside of Hutchinson
a lone print dress dances
on a rusty carousel.
From the yard, she watches the day bleed away.
Clear-channel KCMO stutters on the wideband
in the kitchen.

The vapor lamp out by the road
throws blue-edged ghosts through the curtains
in the fenceless prairie night.
He returns,
a raven in the branches of her memory.
Twisted sheets grasp her breasts and thighs
as the wind breathes huskily at her throat.

At two A.M., she strides the porch,
the Kansas moonscape folds in on her
like a shroud.
Her furious eyes burn
along the endless line of steel
that brought him to her, then
took him
twenty years ago.

is it a poem yet?

Michael Holloway

Do it now!
but the lawn...
I just got started
but a sandwich sounds so good
I love to write
no, to have written
I've got it now
but where's my lucky pencil
To be... to be...
No that's been used before
To have been, will that work?
Maybe just one drink
and I'll get started again
This is good
I like the ending
...but it needs to be longer
They pay by the line.
the real thing

william d. brown

The damn chair again. Bang. Bang. "Move that damn thing, will you?" I haven't moved all day, and I'm not about to now. "I'm telling you now, goddammit." Harold only looked at me. Damn stray. I had an empty liquor bottle beside me. If hit the chair and he sprang up, pissed. Ha. But the damn thing started rocking away, bang banging on the wall. And all the boards were quaking. Oh God.

Then I heard the door knocking. Go away, go away, goddammit. They kept on knocking, wanted me to get up. And I wasn't about to get up. Oh no. They kept knocking. Well let 'em knock. They can go to hell.

It's just the landlady anyway. Who else would come? She never says who she is, hoping I'll open the door by mistake. Like I could mistake the tread of that old bitch's feet. Or the scent of her imitation lilac perfume mingled with her geriatric shampoo...Forget it.

She'll never get the money out of me. I haven't paid her for four months, and I'm not about to pay her now. I'm leaving tonight. Always another hole to hide in. I'm tired of this one. It shakes too much. Ah...She's rattling the door handle. Trying her key. Bitch ought to know by now that I put my own lock on the door. She'll never get in. Oh ho...She's yelling. Well, well. "Let me in now. Give me the money, or you're out." I love to hear her get angry. It's very diverting. "I'm warning you." Warning me, she says. Well, well. She's rattling again. Just wasting her time. "If you don't let me in right now, I'll call the police!" Like I said, she is diverting. But she can become very, very annoying after a while. I scraped a vodka bottle from under my head and hurled it against the door. It exploded into a million tiny worlds. It was beautiful. Old Mrs. Grivitts flew down the stairs going, "Ooh, ooh, ooh," and huffing and snorting like the fat sow she is.


An easy climb. Even Harold made it in style. And a nice, ripe breeze to put a little life into these legs. Yes. Well, the cat ran off when we hit the ground. He'll be back though, sooner or later, or another just like him. It doesn't matter. I'll probably hear the sirens any minute now. Probably already on their way 'cause of Mrs. Grivitts' call. If she did call. But they'll be here soon. Fire ought to have caught good by now, maybe it'll catch Mrs. Grivitts. But me, I'll get away. I move fast. Not that I worry about the police or anything like that. They'll never lay their finger on me. I'm way beyond them, always have been. But I'm not an arsonist, though. That's just fun, not anything serious. I'm not into the petty stuff as a rule. I'm into the real thing. But it's more than a profession, at least the way I see it. It's art.

Like I say, I'm not afraid of the police. I just walk down the street, oh yes, just like any fine, clean mother's son. I'm beyond them. But that's when I saw Billy Glass. Sort of shocked me, you know, he was from another life. Figured he was laid under long ago, long ago... I was coming towards him and he recognized me. "Jesus Christ, how've you been, Harrow?" He even remembered my name. Been a long, long time since anybody called me that.

"Oh...well. But what brings you to this quarter of the city?" I smiled big and wide. Sure, I hadn't seen him since high school. Hell, I didn't even know he was still alive. But, hey, we used to be close, sort of. I was counting on this.

"Looks like we've both hit bad times." I guess I did look pretty rough after a five day drunk and no bath. But him, if he had hit "bad times" I would sure like to see where he had fallen from. He was wearing a nice suit. Kinda out of fashion, but no holes and clean. Hell, his shoes even shone. But looked like he had been hitting himself over the head with the bottle lately, thinking it over, I guess.

Billy seemed to be in a good mood. I guess he was on one of those nostalgic drunkys you sometimes get. He asked me if I had a place to stay, so of course I followed him home.
It was a great night to walk.
"How did college go, Billy?"
"Well, you know how I was always reading books?" Ha. I remembered all right. I was always the one explaining them to him. Only he liked too much English literature. Dickens and stuff like that. We lived up in the publishing business. Yeah. "I had a good job, you know. Five years at that place. But they were losing money, and I was let go."

"So you came here." Yeah, too bad. Fool wouldn't even know what a bad time was.
"I had no where else to go. It's cheap." Right. He probably just came here because it's the fashionable place to decay among the rotten tenements and the dirty old winos on the far side of the Quarter. They weren't great. But even Hell has its penthouses.

We came inside and went up and up. The stairs were tiring me out.
"On the top. Ninth floor." Ninth floor! Billy said he was the only one living on that floor right now. Something about the former tenants going to prison for drug trafficking. So I guess that just about makes Billy the king of the slum, by default.

Billy opened the door. It was dark.

"There's a bulb hanging in the center. Do you have a light or something?"
"I got matches." Oh yes. Plenty of matches. I struck the match and Billy got the light. I put the match out on my tongue, just to see what he'd say. He laughed.

"You still doing that, Harrow? I remember all the teachers used to think you were a pyromaniac or something." I laughed too. I remembered that. Stupid teachers, a lot they knew.

"But you haven't told me what you've been up to. But first have a seat." He motioned towards an old couch, the only piece of furniture. It looked like it had been dragged from a dumpster. Probably had.

"How did you manage to get this thing all the way up here?" I sat down. It squeaked.

"I paid the landlady's sons." He sat down and the squeak was louder this time.

It figured that he paid somebody. Didn't think he'd do it himself. Not Billy. The room wasn't too bad, though. Vacant, but clean. Just the couch and a few blankets in the corner. I supposed there was a bathroom or even a bedroom somewhere but didn't ask.

But now he was in for the story. He asked, and he was going to get it, or as much as I wanted to tell. Now, if anyone was to ask me who I was, I'd tell them to go to Hell, but, after all, this was Billy Glass.

"You're right," he said and took a gulp. "It's just that I'm not used to living like this." I could tell that. But I didn't mention it. For a while we didn't say anything, just passed the bottle back and forth, all warm and enjoying the silence. From the ninth floor the street is just an idea. Then Billy turned to me and took a gulp.

"You know, Harrow, I've been thinking..." He trailed off and kinda stared away for a while. I waited for him to finish.

"I was thinking about that last year of high school. You know, when Miss Wrendall's house burned down." Oh yes, almost forgot about her.

"Yeah. It was spring," I said. Billy looked nervous, like he was suddenly sober and starting to remember just where the hell he was.

"Yes, it was. Sad, wasn't it?"

"Oh yes, Billy, a terrible tragedy." Oh yes. I was smiling and flashing my teeth.

"And she died, she really died."

"Yes. I suppose she did." Billy was really squirming now. Looked like he thought he had something important to say. I thought I'd help him out.

"Why do you ask?"

"Did you do it, Harrow, did you do it? You never did like her." Well, well. Poor Billy got his unburden his soul after all these years.

"Why yes, I did it. But what does that matter now? I was young then."

"Billy wouldn't have any of that. You always did like to start fires." And he started ranting about how the teachers had been right about me being a pyromaniac and such. He was just scared though, like his fear turned him from drunk to sober and now back to drunk again. After all, he's just jealous because it was always me that explained things for him. Too bad, Billy, too bad.

But I finally got tired of hearing him pout, so I shook him until he shut up and stuck the bottle back in his hand. After a few strong gulps, he finally calmed down a bit.
"You don't still do that do you, Harrow? You've changed haven't you?" Poor Billy, probably gonna shit his pants.

"No, Billy, I'm not an arsonist." I smiled big and wide but not really meaning it, since it offends me when someone mistakes me. But the smile seemed to cheer him up.

"So, how 'bout you, Billy, you still a virgin?" I wanted to get his mind going in a different direction, for his own good. And this was the last thing I could remember about him. The girls never liked him back then. But, like I said, it had been a long time.

Billy almost choked on his drink and then gave me a slow, bright smile which let me know right away that he wasn't. He chuckled.

"Jesus, Harrow. You remember all that, huh? Well, it got better in college. Hell, there was this one girl..." And he started off to describe in detail his various time-worn perversions. I stopped listening, though. I had done my job. Now Billy was just any ordinary, happy drunk, speaking exuberantly of those "better days." Yeah, yeah.

Finally Billy stopped talking. I looked and he was asleep. It was late anyhow. Probably close to four. I thought I'd look over the place while he was under. I found the restroom. Not fancy, but it flushed. Hell, this place even had a kitchen as well as a small bedroom. There was nothing in the bedroom but a torn, old mattress with a blanket thrown across it. The landlady's kids probably brought that up too. Nice kids.

I was a little tired, but I ignored that. It was the kitchen that got me. A refrigerator full of food. For a guy who was trying to be a bum, Billy sure knew how to eat. And utensils too. I guess he had taken them with him when he came here. He had plates and glasses and knives and forks and spoons. But no pewter. He probably hocked that. Billy's just a pewter kind of guy. It's too bad...I guess it was all that rattling around in the cabinets that woke Billy. When he staggered into the kitchen, I was holding a particularly beautiful knife. Long and still sharp. I turned around and smiled at him. He ignored the knife, on purpose I think.

"I'm scared of you, Harrow. I don't know who you are anymore."

"You never knew, Billy. I was never into fires or vandalism or any of that trash. I'm into the real thing," I smiled at Billy so big I thought my teeth were going to fall out. But he wasn't reassured.

"What do you...No, just leave, please!"

"Well, well. Billy, my unfaithful host. You never understood, you know. But it's not your fault."

I made over to him and grabbed him. He didn't scream or struggle or anything. I think he kinda expected it, was even relieved sort of. I made the slashes clean and fast. He was over before I dropped him. Didn't want to get fancy. After all, this was Billy...

I ended up sleeping there. I needed it. I took some food and some liquor, and when I hit the street there was a stray waiting on me. It wasn't Harold, but he would do. I was sure glad to get out of that place. Way too high. Yeah, Billy was a nice guy, in his own way. But...and there's no way around it. He was sick all right.
a poem

william d. brown

Epics in motion rolling
Odysseus down the
highway Yeah
greasy, beer-soaked
warriors hanging from
open windows to investigate
their realm
passing round open
bottles of the
cheapest
whiskey, wine, or beer
chugging and howling at
old men, women too afraid
or
jealous
to stare and
mocking the advice of
road signs
All
w/ imperial grace
Yes, it’s the American road in
motion
running w/ mythic backbeat through
night, rain, or
sunny day coming
to a highway near you

morning breath

tina m. grubbs

I look into the mirror
I see someone trapped
Behind glass,
Squeaking the glass,
That same annoying noise
From the bed above my apartment.
Someone peering out
Pleading for help
And me
Just standing here
Brushing my teeth.
perseverance

tina m. grubbs

This fly
With each part
Of its tiny body
Pressing
Against

Taxed to the utmost
Assuming
The glass
Will break
At any moment.

Back and forth
The hard way out.
I guess it just likes
To butt its head
Against things.

Seems unaware
Of the open window,
Missing
By an inch
Its chance.

the hunter

crystal hamilton

If a hunter enjoys
only the kill,
his stalking will be bitter
and the meat will have no taste.

If a gardener enjoys
only the blooms,
his season of happiness will be short,
and he will miss the green.

If a lover enjoys
only making love,
his bed will be cold,
and he will never know his beloved.
Adjusting to the Light

miller williams

--air--air! I can breathe...aah!
Whatever it was, I think I shook it off.
Except my head hurts and I stink. Except
what is this place and what am I doing here?

Brother, you're back. You were dead four days.
Jesus came and made you alive again.

Lazarus, listen, we have things to tell you.
We killed the sheep you meant to take to market.
We couldn't keep the dog, either.
He minded you. The rest of us he barked at.
Rebecca, who cried two days, has given her hand
to the sandalmaker's son. Please understand
we didn't know that Jesus could do this.

We're glad you're back. But give us time to think.
Imagine our surprise to have you--well,
ot well, but weller. I'm sorry, but you do stink.
Everyone, give us some air. We want to say
we're sorry for all of that. And one thing more.
We threw away the lyre. But listen, we'll pay
whatever the sheep was worth. The dog too.
And put your room the way it was before.

book review

Adjusting to the Light: poetry by Miller Williams
Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992. $9.95

Since Richard Brautigan died, I've been without a poet. Richard's
work suited the bohemian lifestyle that I had adopted during the 60's and
70's. Since then, I've broadened my perspective and settled into early
middle-age. But, I've not had a poet of my very own for quite a while.
Dickinson, Whitman, and Yeats belong to the world. Ginsberg and Bly
belong to anybody that will have them. Miller Williams belongs to the
individual. His new collection of poems, Adjusting to the Light, is a
discussion of life, over coffee, with a comfortable old friend. Mr. Williams
possesses the rare ability to breathe humanity into his work in a way that
doesn't cloy. He addresses topics as simple as a phone call and as complex
as death with talmudic sense and humor. The title poem is a closer look
at the resurrection of Lazarus and his family's re-adjustment to the
miracle. The piece is a perfect example of the way Williams casually
strolls through the sublime and the ridiculous. In "Out of a Clear Sky" he
gives voice to God and, suddenly, it is difficult to imagine any other
coming from the creator.

I'm talking here. Is anybody listening?
Why aren't you on the rooftops, into the streets
What do you think you're hearing here, thunder?

This quality drew me into his work, but The Curator made Miller
Williams my poet. The narrator in the poem recalls his job in a Leningrad
museum during the German invasion. He guides visitors through the
battle-scarred galleries while he describes the masterpieces that are no
longer there. Eventually, blind people begin to turn up for the tour.

They leaned and listened hard, they screwed their faces,
they seemed to shift their eyes, those that had them,
to see better what was being said.
And a cock of the head. My God, they paid attention.

Many poets have the power to hold a reader's emotions in hand, but
Miller Williams does it in a uniquely gentle and loving way. Adjusting to
the Light is a treasure.

Copies of Adjusting to the Light and Mr. Williams' previous collection, Living
on the Surface, are available through the English Club, in the Humanities Division
office.
georgann lanich is an art major at Gainesville College. Her poem "The System According to Mr. Bubba Johnson" won second place in this year's writing contest. Georgann is the President of the English Club.

dana nichols is an English scholarship student in her sophomore year. She won third place with her story "Lead Changes" in this year's writing contest.

ty burgess won a second place in this year's competition. He is a sophomore English major.

barbara anne thomas is staff member at Gainesville College. We thank her for her kind assistance and the contribution of her poem.

deanna gunter is a sophomore honors student. She is currently studying Spanish and Russian, which she intends to use in her career as a medical professional. Her plans are to attend the University of Georgia. Deanna is a member of Phi Theta Kappa and is currently on scholarship from the Alumni Association.

michael holloway won third place in the Gainesville College Writing Contest with his poem "Is it a Poem Yet?" He lives with his wife and children in Oakwood.

william d. brown is a sophomore at Gainesville College and a member of the English Club. He has written poems, stories, and essays which have won prizes in the writing contest and have been published in earlier editions of Perceptions and hoi polloi.

tina m. grubbs is a theatre major. She has appeared in several productions including To Kill a Mockingbird. She is a sophomore.

crystal hamilton is a sophomore honors student. She is majoring in English and will attend the University of Georgia as a pre-law student.

paul hodo is a sophomore majoring in English and geology. His story "The Poseurs" and his poem "Tanktown," both won first place in their respective categories in the Gainesville College Writing Contest. Paul is planning to attend college in Arizona next year.

contributors