It is my privilege to report that *Perceptions '94* won second place in the literary magazine category at the 1995 Southern Literary Festival!

Please know this magazine is the product of massive quantities of hours from a small dedicated group of literary devotees. For example, the student and faculty editorial boards labored desperately long hours pouring over document after document, collecting, editing, proofing, criticizing, and selecting what should be in here. A special thanks to Helen Wallington for contributing her handy techn-energy; Anne Bessac for encouraging the art side of this project; and a very special thanks to Tom Sauret for volunteering so desperately much time as faculty advisor to this publication.

I also appreciate Alex Bieri of Bieri Photography in Cumming, Georgia, for his sophisticated attention to detail in the artwork photography and the cover photo.

Student literary work has a place at Gainesville College; it is in your hands. It was fun to do. I hope you find it as fun to read.

Marleen Springston
Editor/1995

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I seen lots of things in jars besides the regular things like jelly or green beans. I seen nails, safety pins, buttons, candy, even lunch, frogs, lightning bugs, a finger, and tincture of merthiolate. Me and my little sister, Issi, were walking back from Granny's with a tiny jar of tincture of merthiolate for Mama to mop her bad throat with when we liked to got run over. We were on the country road--Papa calls it a county road but Mama says, "Ain't nothin' county 'bout a dirt road. It's a country road." Anyhow, it was a white man driving a truck and when he got up close he swerved at me and Issi. Me and Issi took to the ditch runnin' and never looked back. That was the first white man I had seen with my own two eyes. Mama got powerful shook up and wouldn't let us near the country road. She made us walk to school through the hollow, and she made us stay right close to the house for a long time. Only time she let us on the road was to walk to church and, of course, she was right there with us. Mama tried to encourage herself as much as us about not gettin' run over anymore when she said, "Time will change things, you'll see. But it's a slow train comin'. So 'til the train gets to the station--you stay close to the house." If Mama never made us stay to the house me and Issi probably wouldn't have never found the gloves with just nine fingers under Mama's bed.

Issi was lying on her back doing something under Mama's bed. Mama had one of those high beds that light from the window could get under. It also had a foot stool next to it. Mama used the stool to get in bed, but we liked running and jumping and landing right in the middle.
Even though we were always careful to fix back the quilt and pillows, Mama would somehow know we had been jumping on her bed. Last time we got caught, Mama said if she caught us on top of her bed again she would skin us alive. I figured that's why Issi was under her bed.

Issi's puny legs poked out from under the bed. She reminded me of how Alice must have looked in Wonderland when everything was real big and Alice was real little.

I started to scare Issi but was afraid she'd bolt up and hit her head on the springs. Instead I said, "What are you doing?" Issi jumped anyway.

She said, "Neda! Look what I found!"

I crawled under there thinking she didn't find anything spectacular but just wanted company. Issi liked looking at things from peculiar angles but rarely made any great discoveries. But this time she really found something. She handed me a pair of torn up wool gloves.

Issi said, "Look! There's only nine fingers. One glove has five and one has just four. Try 'em on. They feel funny."

Sure enough the pinky finger was missing off one glove. I slipped them on. My end finger felt strange without a place to be. We laughed when I waved my hands around like I was waving to somebody and only had four fingers. Issi pulled away like she was scared of them when I reached for her.

Then Issi showed me the worn out plastic bag she had got the gloves from. About the time I wanted to put the gloves up Mama called us from outside. Issi snatched the gloves back, put them in the bag and crammed the bag back in the springs under Mama's bed. We scrambled out from under the bed and hollered together, "Mama!"

Mama said, "Come on girls. We got to get to church. And Issi...bring your hair bow."

I was real glad today was Canning Sunday at church because it would help keep Issi and me from thinking about those gloves all day. We promised each other we wouldn't look under Mama's bed no more and we wouldn't tell nobody 'bout the gloves. The fact that it was Canning Sunday would help us forget about our secret.

All seven years Miss Graves had been coming to our church she held Canning Sunday. We had never had Canning Sunday before she came. We had never had a white lady in church either 'til her. Church sure got quiet that day. Miss Graves sat on the first free row behind the members. It's a good thing that row was free. The rows don't really belong to nobody anyway, but because folks get accustomed to sitting in the same place people learn where to sit and where not to. Mama calls Reverend Jones' sermon that day the "Ah-Huh-Well" sermon because he kept staring at Miss Graves, stopped preaching and said, "Ah huh. Well..." and then he start to preaching again. Folks started being friendly to Miss Graves after her first Canning Sunday.

Sometime after harvest Miss Graves carried her cannings to church and gave it to members after the service. She always sat on the back row on Canning Sunday to where she could sneak out before the benediction. About the time Reverend Jones said, "Thank you most heavenly God the Father for life itself...for our shut-ins and our orphans and widows...for our president...children, enemies, backslid..." and when he got to "and thank you God for Seclusaville First Holiness of Prophecy..." Miss Graves would slip out the last row and fall at sneaking across the creaking dry hardwood floor. She may as well have shouted "amen" because when she slipped out it be just like before the bell rings in school; people sittin' there thinkin' 'bout nothin' except what was about to happen.

As soon as we got the real "amen," all the children walked faster than a mad hatter to the front door. Mamas acted like they were going after their children when they were in just as much a hurry to get their cannings.

Miss Graves was wearing white cotton gloves and stood in front of the towering magnolias harding out jar after jar of something wonderful. This time it was strawberry-fig preserves, peach preserves, blackberry jam, apple butter and those special kind of pears that she doesn't give to the children until they promise to "give it to Papa."

Mama was never in quite the hurry others that she were to get cannings. I even gently fussed at her for not getting herself a jar of apple butter. Mama said, "Neda, you best hush up and get Issi. And I thought I told you to fix her hair bow!"

Mama had made it my job to keep Issi's hair bow fixed. It wouldn't have been so bad, but Issi and a hair bow is like a cat chasing its tail; the more I fix her bow the more she pulls and tugs at it. The more she pulls and tugs the more I've got to fix it. I found Miss Issi-no-hair-bow, and we caught up with Mama.

Before we got out the church yard Miss Graves chased after Mama the way ladies do when they try to run and be pretty at the same time; her left hand held her dress a little higher than her knees and her other hand was curled around a jar of pears. Miss Graves said short of breath,
"There's plenty here. Please take this jar of pears to Jeb. You know it might help to get him to church for next canning." Mama gave in and took the jar and smiled a pitiful smile—the one she reserves for when people feel sorry for her because Papa isn't in church. Mama said, "Thank you, Miss Graves. You're very generous." Miss Graves hugged Mama. Mama half-hugged her back and studied Miss Grave's white gloves the whole time. As Miss Graves walked away she told folks to "Remember to return the jars and lids when you're done with them. Sometime before Easter would be just fine." Mama seemed to get a chill up her back at what Miss Graves said.

Issi jabbed my ribs and whispered, "Miss Grave's gloves got ten fingers."

Mama said, "Issi, where's your bow?" Issi pulled it out of her pocket. Mama went on to say, "You know Neda when you were little I never had a lick of trouble getting you to wear your hair bow."

On the way home Mama told me she thought it was peculiar for someone to give out so much canning. It wasn't nearly as peculiar to me as the way Miss Graves wore white gloves all the time or 'specially the way she wore her new dresses to church on the Sundays after the special Sundays. And it wasn't nearly as peculiar to me as having gloves with nine fingers in a sack under the bed.

Issi and I had kept our secret from Canning Sunday all the way up through Easter. Miss Graves did her peculiar thing again by not wearing an Easter dress on Easter Sunday. Easter for everyone else at church was the typical fashion show; black or white tappy shoes on little girls, too short-a-sleeved suits on little boys, and the fathers that hadn't seen church since last Christmas were wearing wide ties and white shirts. Mrs. Hulsey wore a shiny green dress. Mrs. Reese had on a white dress with all different colored hydrangea on it. Miss Carden wore a new white dress again probably because she still dreams of getting married. All the women and some girls had on white gloves which was not unusual for Miss Graves because she always wore them, but what was reliably unusual was Miss Graves' old dress on a special Sunday. I felt like she had her Sundays confused the way babies sometimes get day confused with night. I never did say anything to her Easter Sunday except, "You sure look pretty, Miss Graves." But it was real hard not to say something to her about confusing her days when I saw her the next Friday at school.

Mrs. Harrell quieted us before we could go outside. Each year on the Friday after Easter Miss Graves visited school and demonstrated how to plant cotton. I guess she could have planted anything but she always planted cotton. She brought cookies and big old mayonnaise jars filled with lemonade. She wore her white gloves. Once all the classes were assembled around, Miss Graves took up a hoe and parted the red clay like it was the Red Sea. After working a few feet of the clay into a sufficient row, she'd give her hoe over to one of the big boys and supervise the rest of the project. The bigger kids broke up the dirt and the smaller ones got to plant the seeds. The teachers talked the whole time about seed coats, photosynthesis, chlorophyll, and the sun. To our delight it took more than half the day to finish the row. About the time we tired of cottonseeds, clay, Miss Graves, and lemonade, the bell rang.

I caught up with Issi and the others outside of school as they headed toward the hollow. Issi and I decided to take another look at the wet row before walking home. Issi squatted like a frog and laid her cheek on the wet red clay. I knew Issi well enough to know she was studying the row from a different view. Miss Graves, however, looked at Issi mighty strange when she walked up to us. Miss Graves said, "I used to bring cotton bolls to the school every year. Then it occurred to me that it might be more of a learning experience if students planted and tended the row themselves. What's Issi doing?"

That's when I started to ask her about confusing her Sundays when Issi asked, "Wheredya get the cotton bolls from?"

Miss Graves looked pleased Issi had been paying attention and said, "Why I grew them at my house, Miss Isabella."

"Why'd you grow cotton at your house? Are you a farmer?" asked Issi.

Miss Graves shook out her arms a little like when a bird tries to straighten ruffled feathers and then said, "I plant a row of cotton in my backyard every year. On Good Friday;"

"Why do you plant cotton every year on Good Friday?"

"Isabella. You ask a lot of questions," said Miss Graves.

"Why you plant cotton every year?"

"Everybody plants on Good Friday. I just happen to plant cotton," said Miss Graves. "I kind of miss seeing cotton in all the fields." Miss Graves stared off to the row and said, "Of course I don't miss all the work. People don't realize how hard it is to pick and clean cotton. You can get pretty scared up picking and cleaning cotton by hand."

Issi started to ask another question but Miss Graves said, "Now you run along with Neda and tell your Mama I need my jars back." Then she
shooed at us with her white gloves.

Then all of a sudden Issi said, "Our gloves only have nine fingers." Miss Graves knelt down on one knee in front of Issi. She held Issi by the shoulders and looked in her eyes. Then Miss Graves looked up at me and said, "What gloves, Neda? What gloves is Issi talking about?"

I looked at Issi hard and said, "Issi found an old pair of gloves with nine fingers. That's all. We got to go. Come on, Issi."

I scolded Issi big for blabbing. She looked like she might start crying so I just said, "Where's your hair bow?" Issi pulled it out of her pocket and I fixed it in her hair. Mama was waiting on the porch for us when we got home. She had her hands cinched up on her hips and was shaking her head like we had done something we shouldn't. She said, "You girls get washed up. Neda, you wait out here a minute." Issi whimpered just long enough to get a look from Mama then stomped inside.

Mama said, "Miss Graves's jars are ready to go back. I want you to come with me in the morning to carry them to her."

"But Mama...tomorrow is Saturday. Can't we just wait and give 'em to her Sunday at church?"

Mama said, "We'll go in the morning right after breakfast. Now run and get washed." I told Mama I wanted Issi to come. Mama said she'd think about it.

Soon as breakfast was over Mama had me go to the shed for the hoe before we left for Miss Graves. Issi carried it a ways before Mama told her to lay the hoe down alongside the road in some wild azaleas. Mama carried the worn plastic bag with the gloves in it and the clean jars and lids for Miss Graves. I asked Mama what was in the bag just so she'd think we didn't know what was in it. She moved the bag to her side opposite of me and Issi. I wondered why Mama had kept the gloves secret.

I felt like talking so I asked Mama about why she puts up only three jars of something every year. Mama said, "Long as I remember I only ever put up 3 jars of something. Your Granny done the same thing."

"You do it 'cause Granny did it?"

"No shoog. I probably do it 'cause all I have is three jars," Mama laughed. Then she handed me the jars and lids and said, "More likely though I do it because whatever we put up helps us get through the season without no kind a gardening. The Thanksgiving jar sets us in for the winter. It reminds us of the treasure from our hard work in the garden."

I thought that was awful pretty for Mama to think whatever was in the jar was treasure. She went on to say, "The Christmas jar is a special gift to share at a time when things are at their darkest and coldest and looking like it might never end." Then Mama said, "The Easter jar is opened to celebrate the fruit of what will come from the hard work ahead." Mama stopped talking and was meditating. She didn't look where she was going but just kept staring ahead. Then she said, "Neda, that's why we're carrying Miss Grave's jars back to her. They's important to her. She needs hers like we need ours." I had a feeling like Mama wasn't telling me something.

Mama started studying the walk up Miss Graves's front porch when she asked, "Did you know Miss Graves is Miss Austella Graves? That's what gave me my first feeling that Miss Graves had it."

Before I could ask why she and Miss Graves had the same first name or why the name "it" was, Mama knocked on Miss Austella Graves's door. I could see a pair of white gloves inside on the kitchen counter near the door. Miss Graves came from another room. No gloves on. She reached for her gloves with one hand and the door with the other. Mama reached in the door and told Miss Graves that she didn't have to. Miss Graves lowered her head and with scarred up hands set the gloves back on the counter. It looked like she wiped a tear from her cheek when Mama handed her the worn plastic wrapped package.

We all sat down at the round wood table. Time slowed way down as a clock ticked seriously from somewhere in the house. Miss Graves opened the package very deliberately; first setting it on the table, turning it over and laying back the first fold. She sat back in her chair and took a short but deep breath. She held the package with one hand and reached in with the other slowly pulling out the worn-out-to-uselessness pair of dark wool gloves. Miss Graves turned the gloves over to the one with only four fingers. She pulled the gloves up to her face like she was about to kiss a baby. Instead she began sobbing quietly into them. Mama put her arms around Miss Graves and was crying herself.

What could I do but sit there and look from the ceiling to the floor? The floor was cleaner than the ceiling which really bothered me because of the way Miss Graves has her special Sunday dresses backwards. Issi tilted her head and looked back and forth at Miss Graves and Mama. I wondered if that clock affected Issi the way it was affecting me. I set the jars from the last canning on the table. I wondered what was in the cabinets. I needed some air.
Miss Graves finally got up from the table and helped Mama up as if Mama were feeble. They held hands as we walked outside. Miss Graves was still holding the dark gloves. Issi accidentally let the screen door slam. Mama and Miss Graves jumped a mile and turned to look back all in the same move! They took a big breath of relief when they saw it was just me and Issi. We walked past what must have been Miss Graves new row of cotton and continued toward her shed.

"Did your mama ever tell you why she called you Austella?" asked Mama.

"No. Did yours?" asked Miss Graves.

"No. Never did," said Mama.

Miss Graves reached in to turn on the light and then looked at Mama. She placed both of her hands on Mama's hand as though to reassure Mama. Miss Graves said, "You don't have to do this if you don't want to, Mrs. Cooper." Mama trembled.

I whispered, "Miss Graves said you don't have to do this, Mama." Mama studied Miss Graves and nodded her bandanna wrapped head yes.

Miss Graves turned on the light. Her tiny little shed had the work bench just below a small window with ripply glass. Canning jars lined narrow shelves along the walls. Boxes of jars were under her bench and behind the door. Some of the jars had cotton seeds in them. All the jars were dusty. Cotton boll hulls over filled a red fertilizer bucket.

Miss Graves reached up to the shelf above the window. She took down one jar then another. Then she took down an older looking jar. Older than the other jars. It had a simpler shape. The lid looked like it wasn't coming off. Miss Graves set it on her work bench. She held the jar like it was keeping her hands warm. A folded up piece of paper lined the jar.

"My great-grandfather never asked for payment, Mrs. Cooper," said Miss Graves.

"We know. We all know." Mama paused a long time and said, "Only thing we didn't know was who had the jar after your great-grandfather passed." Miss Graves said, "For a long time I had heard there was a jar with a finger and a note in it. We never spoke of it formally. Just children passing on ghost stories. As a child I feared the attic for that story. No one ever found the jar...at least not in the attic. I was grown when I found the jar. I never told anyone about it. I figured I might hear from someone someday. I opened it then and haven't opened it since." Miss Graves went on, "The note says, 'For giving to me what I could not give myself-freedom.' And it was signed, 'J. Cope.'"

Mama said, "J. Cope. The J is for Jeremiah, he was my great-grandfather. He knew his freedom was bought by Judge Graves and given as a gift. Grandpa told us that Jeremiah Cope cut off his own end finger himself, put it in a jar and give it to Judge Graves so the judge would remember how important freedom was to Jeremiah."

Miss Graves slid the jar across the bench toward Mama. Austella Graves and Austella Cope Cooper hugged and cried quiet tears again for what seemed to be a very long time.

As we were leaving the yard I steadied Mama. I noticed a compost of almost pure cotton hulls.

When we got to the hoe in the wild azaleas I started digging. Mama set the jar down near a tree. Mama said, "The roots run deep here, Neda. We best leave it here," As I finished digging Mama unwrapped her bandanna. We both turned toward the jar. Issi was holding it in both her hands over her head looking through the bottom of it. Issi brought it to Mama. Mama wrapped the jar in her bandanna.

Mama was slow 'bout getting to church next morning. Miss Graves was already in her row when we got there. I stopped at Miss Graves' row and looked at Mama. Mama directed us to slide in with Miss Graves. As I passed Mama, she grinned and whispered, "You hear a train?"

Issi no more than sat down when she started tugging at her hair bow. I reached over and took it out of her hair. I handed it to Mama, grinned and whispered, "You hear a train?"

Reverend Jones must have spotted something out of place right away because he looked at us over his glasses. He paused a second and said, "Ah-huh. Well..." and started to preaching.
lily, lily, rose
first place poetry: southern literary festival 1995

candice brancato

Far and away
the soft snow falls
with a silence that envelops the crowd
of stacks and pylons and fences
and the tiny school
Bradwell Endowed.

Dulled footsteps plod on
down well trodden streets toward home,
and icy fingers that scrape through the black trees
whisper with hoarse voice:
"Lily, Lily, Rose."

Each crack in the pavement yawns sleepless,
the congregation shuffles ready to sing
and the wrath of God rips through the pulpit
while the faithless seek
refuge in sin.

White fields in their hush stretch out easy
dozing on parishioner's song,
the breath of malignance sighs deep,
and the power plant
with smug face
hums on.

daddy's breathing

candice brancato

When Walter went the family hovered on
waiting for hour upon hour,
for some obscure reason believing
that the soul lingers before it transcends toward heaven
as though it were some mystical shower.

Why hello nurse! We're just sitting by Daddy
waiting to bid him one more farewell;
Oh Lord! (thinks nurse) There's so much to do here
and soon rigor will set in as well.

Well really--nurse what a face! Don't
you believe then? To us it's blatantly clear
that you've been at your job far too long and
you've grown hardened and unfeeling we fear.

Just then, as if in objection, the stiff Walter
explodes with ripe sound,
compressed air escaping from each orifice
and rattling the bed right to the ground.

The family leap to their feet in abject horror--
Oh no! Whatever's that noise? someone whispers
"I think Daddy's breathing"
they turn to nurse who waits patiently near,
now, now, don't you worry--it's just the air in the pipes
my poor dears.
rubies in the dust

candice brancato

Ah, but our bed remains
an island to me;
far from the scaffolding and sheet-rock mud,
the cobwebs and rust-hinged doors,
silently they swing
agape as you lay me down;
each touch as dangerously profound as
words on a torn page, figures
on an illuminated stage and
here we are again my love;
rubies in the
dust.

lonely night

candice brancato

Lonely night.
Memory stirs within this moment,
when the moon sweats to a pulse
long remembered
and once more
you move against me;
a breathless wind that
carries me as I
cling like rust
to the iron in your soul.
the sheriff of platts ville

marion j. darracott

the tallest man in town
wore a pair of bone-handled Peacemakers
and a tin star,
spat tobacco twenty feet
through a brush of mustache -
talked of his travels to come
before his passing
to places named Badlands,
Durango and Dodge
as if he would give
all of his bullets to be there -
said he could shoot the twinkle
out of a bird's eye
from a thousand feet -
but we never saw him do it,
we did see him spit
a wad of brown juice
across the face
of a nasty desperado once
who had travelled from Kansas
just to shoot a hole
through a tin star
but decided against it -
after that it didn't seem to matter
whether he could shoot that twinkle
from the bird's eye or not -
he lived until he died of whooping cough
and we buried him with his guns,
tin star and a plug to chew on
until he got to where he was going.

the wheels of tanner's mill

marion j. darracott

pot-bellied stoves
cast off the winter's chill
as the grist wheels grind
what was into what will be -
where the sacks fill faster
than in July -
when the millers
have little need
for the stove
nor speed -
the waterfall outside
sounds louder
in summer
when the river moves
with greater ease
than the wheel that crushes corn.
clothing did not make the man  
marion j. darracott

grandfather wore respect  
like a flannel shirt,  
carried himself about  
with a sycamore cane,  
talking in the native tongue  
of the rich and poor,  
learned and un-educated;  
many mistook his style  
for commonness  
upon first acquaintance  
only to find themselves  
soon short of prose  
on any subject -  
save egotism and dishonor -  
there was no pretense  
in his disdain  
for either subject  
of which he knew nothing.
carl london
oil painting 20 x 24

michael daniels
third place
graphite pencil 14 3/4 x 20 1/2
amy wilson
ink 12 x 11

jacquie calhoun
second place
scratchboard 9 3/4 x 11 3/4
stephanie bean
watercolor  10 x 13 3/4

j. rickett
scratchboard 8 x 10 3/4
carl london
first place
oil painting 18 x 24

kris killinger
mask 7 x 20 x 3
ashlee peck
charcoal 14 1/2 x 19

jacquie calhoun
watercolor 10 1/2 x 13 1/4
amy henderson
graphite pencil 16 x 12

ian potts
graphite pencil 16 1/2 x 22
david welborn
scratchboard 8 1/4 x 10 3/4

mark mitchell
scratchboard 8 x 10 3/4
Annie began getting ready to go out for dinner. She slipped into her navy, wool, ankle-length dress. It slimmed her full figure. Looking in the mirror, she blushed her cheeks rose and tinted her lips a pale pink. She walked over to the window and pushed the lace curtain back. Annie Payne was touring Dresden alone. Her husband, John, died last year; they were going to visit the city together. The drizzle left the city dreary. People walked somberly, heads down into the rain clutching umbrellas. From her window she could see a bombed out glockenspiel. Everything in East Germany seemed closed down. All over the city Russians loaded army trucks. They were moving out of Dresden. From her window, she looked down on half-empty streets and saw run-down ladies. Trams passed under her window starting and stopping, and the heavy wheels scraped against the iron tracks as they rumbled passed the hotel. Annie slowly released the curtain and it fell back. Switching the lamp off, she locked the door behind her and left the hotel.

Outside, the rain felt cold against her face. She used her left hand to pull her coat collar up to warm her neck and her right hand fingered the button on her umbrella until it flipped open. The narrow cobblestone street looked slippery from the rain. Annie walked a long way on Niedereinstrasse and then stopped. She thought she walked too far, or maybe she was on the wrong street. For a moment, she huddled with her umbrella trying to catch a street sign for her location, but the trams thundered back and forth blurring her thoughts. Searching her purse for a city map, she stopped under a street light to attempt to find her way.

It must be at the end of this street, next to the coffee house, as she looked up to find a name, or even a hanging sign. "Im Garten Haus" read the sign above her head. It was printed in old German lettering and the restaurant looked quaint. She was happy to be out of the rain as she walked inside.

She sat down at the table in the corner by a window and the table next to her was vacant. The fire warmed the stucco walls of the empty room. The oak wood floors smelled damp. Annie stared out the window as trams stopped to pick up passengers and leave passengers off. She wondered where they were going. Then the clang of the bell rang and the tram rolled into the night.

An old man walked into the restaurant carrying his wet umbrella. He limped and tottered slowly across the floor using his cane. He sat at the table next to her fumbling with his umbrella and his rubber-tipped cane as he tried to settle into his chair. She watched him for a while, a thin man, tall, wearing a wrinkled overcoat too short for him, but he still looked dignified. The waiter walked up to Annie's table and she ordered a spazeil and an alt. He took the menu and walked away.

She pulled out her book and began reading until her food came. Then she heard a voice, "It is a gut book," the man said. She looked up, startled. It was the old man she had seen fumbling at his chair. "Before the Deluge by Otto Friedrich, I am correct, ja?" the old man asked, peering over his thick lenses.

"Yes, Before the Deluge," she answered, "then checked the cover. "I know it well," the stranger said. He lit his pipe and puffed and puffed until the sweet aroma filled the air. "Lotte Lenya and Marlene Dietrich, ja, they filled the cabarets in Berlin." He puffed on his pipe and blew out a cloud of smoke. "I didn't mean to starele you. I'm sorry if I did," he said, with a gentle smile. "But if you join me, it can't hurt. I'm an old man and I'd like the company." Annie smiled brightly. "I'd like that very much," she told him, and moved to his table. A candle burned and the light cradled his aged face and deep lines creased his pale skin. It looked thin and fragile. The old man was polite and Annie liked him.

"Please," he said, "my name is Professor Edwin Luden...and yours?"
He extended his hand out and began shaking hers.


"Ah—Annie Payne. It is not a German name is it?"
Annie smiled. But what the old man didn't know was Annie's deep interest in Dresden where her parents lived. She had listened to her Dad's
stories about the glockenspiel in the square. Her Dad talked about it over and over. "Annie," he'd say, "it chimed! It played music and mechanical figures danced, rotating, and every part moved. At Christmas, as a little boy, I'd stand in the square. The snow blanketed the street and the cold stung my face. It felt numb. I'd wait. The chimes sounded, the figures danced, and the music played." Later her father wondered if the name Keller was left on his house on Kirchweg. *Father's house was a dwelling that vanished a long time ago.*

The old man leaned over the table slightly. "You are not English?" he questioned quietly, as if he needed to keep this a secret, his gray eyes looking over his spectacles. "No." She faintly laughed. "I'm an American--from Grand Rapids, Michigan."

"Ah," he said tentatively, "Grand Rapids, Michigan," brushing his thin fingers through his coarse gray beard, as if he knew where Grand Rapids, Michigan was.

"Do you live here?" Annie questioned.

"I was born here, ja. I was born right here in Dresden. But I lived in Weimar. I was an art professor at the Weimar University many years ago, but I came back when the war started. I worked part-time here in Dresden at the University, and I worked at the city hospital where they were short of help because of the war, you know. I drove the ambulance. ja," he hesitated, his voice dropped. "After the sirens stopped, sometimes I drove to the hospital; sometimes I drove to the morgue. Here," he said, "let me show you something." The stranger reached into his pocket and showed Annie an old photograph with edges that curled. The old man laid it on the white linen tablecloth and began pressing out the lines, pressing over them with care. "Here, can you see? This is my mother and father. It is their wedding picture." His face glowed as he looked at the soiled snapshot. "Look, you see, she's holding rosebuds." The old man kept running his fingers over the creased photo.

The stranger and Annie sat silent as the trams clanged along past the window. "It was during the war," he began, "it was a terrible time for Germany and I wanted to be with my parents." He told Annie how he had been born crippled and how they'd worried about him, and how he couldn't play in the park with other children. Annie listened.

"It was Hitler's army," he said, "we were not all Nazis in Germany. But it didn't matter; the war was what Hitler wanted for Deutschland and no one could escape." He sat his pipe on the table, folded one arm over the other, and continued talking. "I was twenty-nine years old when the heavy bombing started in Dresden. Sirens screamed. People ran for shelter. I was at work and away from my home. I hurried to the cellar of the building. It was crowded with people everywhere...children, old people, young people, and mothers huddled over their babies. Overhead bombers flew. Fire bombs dropped over the city. I thought they would never end. I cupped my hands over my ears to shut the noise out. The second wave came. I waited, very still, like death passing over me. It all stopped. Sirens bellowed. That always meant the streets were safe for a while. But my street was gone. It was not there anymore." The stranger spoke without much emotion, and he had nothing more to say. Annie wanted to ask him about his mother and she wanted to ask him about his father too, but didn't. She thought about her own parents. She thought about the Nazi movement. She thought about the war and the Russians. The waiter stopped at the table. Annie ordered two *als.* A Russian soldier walked into the cafe. He wore a long brown military coat. He passed the table. He sat down next to a window, and watched the night. The old man looked over his metal-rimmed glasses, his gray eyes staring into hers. "Now," he said passively, "and now, we speak Russian and Hitler is dead."

The wind blew rain against the window and Annie felt a cold chill. The stranger left. She watched him board a well lit tram. He pulled his coat collar to his neck and sat down, never speaking to the man next to him. Another tram passed and when Annie looked again, he was gone. For a moment she stared out the window looking at the tracks. Other trams crossed, switching lines, and the system seemed complex as trams powered past the restaurant carrying passengers somewhere into the city.
apple
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He is the ultimate salesman,
A real smooth talker, big dreamer, low-action kind of guy.
He has a good-looking, enthusiastic face,
And when he talks about what he likes, his eyes sparkle.
Always looking for the fast lane, the easy way,
He burns the 4 a.m. oil at an after hours gay-bar
Packing heat and cocaine.
Gangster blood surges through his veins
As he scopes out his latest customer, the latest victim.
And with a pitch that makes a head spin,
He leads another poor soul to the bathroom
With a razor, a mirror, and a neatly-rolled $100 bill.

Of course when I met him,
He used his talent to sell a different bill of goods:
With an eager smile and adept mouth
He had me on my back in no time flat
And he filled my head with so many things
That I wanted to hear I never even saw it coming.
The sale had been made:
My heart for his temporary enjoyment
Like the recreation he pushes now.
All I've got to show is a broken blood pump in my hands
And a hole in the chest, and the note attached read,
"Sorry, had to go."

Go where? I thought, back to the fast lane?
Dead at 21, another name listed
But without the chip in his head.
And here he comes again, same old pitch, same old lines,
And really, you'd think I'd know better.
But what this is, it's like the apple hung
To lead a starving horse across the wasteland.
I journey in blind to everything but the momentary joy --
I'll be sated by sinking my teeth in.
And it's only temporary, I know, just like with the horse,
But a nibble at reality, at being real and not hungry,
Is better than five courses of fantasy night after night.
I know better, but still I say,
"Lead on into the wasteland, apple."

nowhere comfort

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al

I wondered, had I imagined these devices
Always watching since a child?
I ran a mile to Susan's house,
And the eyes of the forest were fixed.
The smell of juniper, the crunch of fallen leaves,
I explored the holes in logs and hid --
"Get down, they're coming."
A child, to grow up innocent -- not for me,
I knew things, and I heard the voices, too.
To be alone, my greatest want
And my greatest fear,
Solace, soothing comfort in the nowhere.
The taste of checkerberries on my tongue,
I lie like Ophelia in the stream,
Staring at stars, they were staring back
At a small child with cropped hair
And an awkward gait.
Everyone but my mother knew:
"She's a freak, that little girl,"
As if in the next room, I couldn't hear them talking.
Walking in the garden at midnight,
The sound of my voice, soft and quiet
Under the ring around a full moon.
Ryan should be here tonight,
Before the rain comes a second time,
To smell the cool air it left behind.
Let the wind caress, the only knowing hand
Left to gently lift and twirl my hair.
Celtic gold, isn't that what mother called it?
And to see the moon, a great silvery orb
Shimmering with the dust of butterfly wings.
Like fairy glamour, he walks with me tonight
Under a canopy of twinkling lights;
But the drug faded and morning came,
And I fell asleep with gentle rain falling
Upon my cloth-covered body.
ma vie sans un homme
helen wallington

I'll have more time for books and things
Now that I've dispensed with tinkering
With the heart of that playful boy
With whom I tried my best to be coy;
But I'm a crueler creature than he,
And I get my kicks off the sting of a bee --
Wrapped him up in my widow's web
And kicked his carcass out of my bed;
Yet still a softness screams within,
And my darker side grows weak and dim
When I think of how he looked at me,
His eyes aglazed with love and seemed
To dare my heart to fall.
But I've spent years letting this wall
Form around those feeling parts that I
Had thought I'd bidden my last good-bye;
No, No, I shall not let myself regret
That I've proved my loveless bet.
He'll not think fondly of me in one week's time
And I'll lose no sleep over my crime.
Here it comes, that voice again,
To judge my bitter ways and then
With troubled brow, I'll lay down my head
And wonder does he sleep instead --
In spite of the sinister games I play
Upon the heart of yet another one who wanted to stay;
I warned him, yet still he would come
Into my kingdom where my will be done
On earth as where else I'll never know
With no cherished memories to show
For all my bed-sport histories,
Ma vie sans un homme, and all my other so-called victories.

altar call
micki leciardi

I'm cheap
'cause I give my sex so readily.
Cheap?
I should hold out for 'more'
like marriage?
And barter my commodity to the highest bidder?
Instead I use it
over and over and over
to enjoy.
That veil to the holy of holies
was rent a long time ago --
No thunder and lightning ensued
But a trickle
of blood and a moan.
The wooly fleece dampened by desire,

Not golden
But black as sin,
made holier to me for the use thereof.

This belly's held some babies,
these breasts suckled them too.
Veiny legs wrapped around plenty
of sweaty backs --
Holier for the use, all.

Cheap, you say?
Lord, I've spent my sin
not horded it
to bestow on religious men.
Spent and used,
I rejoice in my salvation
'cause it's worth ten of your marriages.

And I'll still sup with you in heaven.
**eulogy**

*micki liciardi*

You'd held me down for so long
that when you died
I was amazed at the wondrous light
feeling in my soul
And I marveled
at my sudden perfect flight.

**jittery joe's**

*jon thompson*

Oh wondrous gutter rat
hold me in your cigarette glow
your cocoa bean breath
breathes through me
it breathes into me life
fills me with an energy
nervous sexual kinetic energy
to get me through the night
filled with flying vermin
caffeine conspiracy creme filled
delights offered unto me
a dollar and a shilling
buys me your contentment
and safe surroundings
with other iconoclasts like me
give me a church
filled with atheist nonsouls
so we can sing a hymn
an ode
an ode to a coffeehouse
it's a sunny day
Lemuel Apple

it's a sunny day.
mommy's lying next
to her latest john.
the patient wolves and their junkies
wait for another victim.
it's a sunny day.
the dirt-laden tears of the drunk
are unheeded by
the corporate business man who
is too busy making his way to work because
well, that's not his problem.
it's a sunny day.
cops beat the shit out of a 13-year-old boy
for spraying something on a wall
who the hell knows what.
it's a sunny day.
I take a deep breath
and step outside.

by moonlight
Bobbie Lock

I awaken at dusk as
the sun begins its descent.
On the eastern horizon lies
the moon. A new day starts
for those who roam
the night.

The moon is my sun. Darkness,
that mysterious cloak of shadows,
is my light. My loved ones,
fast asleep, do not understand
my ways.

As my morning fades away,
I lunch beneath the stars.
I lean back and enjoy the cool
night air.

This life is not merely
a choice. This is the way
I am.
We all have days we cherish; days we will never forget; days packed with stirred emotions, growth. Big days. Those days are rare. This might explain why big days are priceless. I had one of those days recently and it all started with lunch in Chattanooga.

I was given permission to miss classes one day to ride to Tennessee with two Gainesville College English professors to meet Gwendolyn Brooks (Pulitzer Prize winner in poetry in 1950 for *Annie Allen*) and interview her for the 1995 edition of *Perceptions*. We met Ms. Brooks in a hotel lobby and decided to have lunch before returning to Gainesville.

I somehow got the chair farthest away from Ms. Brooks. I wrestled the rest of lunch trying to think of a creative way I could pull a chair up next to her and not look foolish at the same time. You see, Ms. Brooks looked very interesting. She looked like someone fun to talk to. She looked smart, quick, and brilliant. It wasn't her dyed brown hair, or her kerchiefed hair, or the dozen long stemmed roses she carried. It was her "I'm-on-the-planet" spirit, it was her "I-know-what's-in-your-heart" eyes, it was her "who-cares-if-I'm-the-only-one-laughing" laugh, and it was her "I'm-better-than-no-one-and-no-one-is-better-than-me" gentle manner that fueled my curiosity. I never got to sit next to her at lunch but I did get to interview her in the van on the way back to Gainesville. I also spent part of the next three days with her. Big days.

Ms. Brooks accepted the interview (albeit in a van on winding roads through the North Georgia mountains). However, Ms. Brooks declined a visual recording of her reading and lecture stating:

Television is a demystifier. The author enters the viewers' impression-apparatus as an image along with such images as Kentucky Fried Chicken, Anacin, and Fancy Feast for Kittens. Television is forever your slice with all its negatives—T.V. has awesome repeat potential. [On television] long after you're dead your negatives overwhelm your positives and go on and on and on a down the future, excerpted, extended or "adjusted," or worsened, at a user's option.

*Perceptions*: To quote from a preface to the second edition of *Contemporary American Poetry* by Donald Hall: "A world of black poetry exists in
America alongside the world of white poetry, exactly alike in structure—
with its own publishers, bookstores, magazines, editors, anthologists,
conferences, poetry readings—and almost entirely invisible to the white
world. Like the rest of the black world. The world of white poetry has
practiced the usual genteel apartheid of tokenism: here is praise for
Langston Hughes, here is a Pulitzer Prize for Gwendolyn Brooks; now
we've done our liberal bit, let's go back to reading The New York Review of
Books." What has changed?

Ms. Brooks: Things have changed so much except for that last part which
I am afraid is still true. There is not that much critical interest in Black
poetry. In fact the whole idea of there being such a thing as Black poetry
is often resented. But people like myself travel around a great deal and
find that there is a real interest in it when it is offered, when it is there to
be considered.

Perceptions: Why are you traveling around a great deal?

Ms. Brooks: I make my living speaking across the country. I don't make a
living publishing poetry. (Laughing) That happens in Russia, so the
Russian poets told me. I was there in '82 and they kept asking how much
money an American poet could make and I answered: If we have an
dition of, say, 5000 copies we think that's pretty good. Their eyebrows
went up. They said, "Wow. Over here 100,000 copies of an edition of
poems is nothing to be particularly (proud of), because that's the usual."
They really do love books over there. You see people reading books as
they walk in the streets.

Perceptions: Is it a mistake to pigeon hole writers as "Black poets,"
"women writers," or 'young writers' etc?

Ms. Brooks: Well you can't do that now. There are poets like Rita Dove
(I hope you know her poetry.) She is the poet laureate of the country for
the second year. As you read a lot of her poetry you won't know who
wrote it [whether a Black or white poet]. That's true of some of mine.
Certain poems anybody might have written. And now that fact is more
noticeable then ever. In the late 60's a Black poet was often defined by
whether you could tell that a Black hand had issued it. But now that is no
longer true. So many poets that I know want desperately to sound, quote,
"as good as white poets." And by that they mean as obscure as possible.
Many of them want to be obscure, where possible.

Perceptions: Why is American poetry becoming so obscure? What is the
value of obscurity?

Ms. Brooks: I guess you'll have to dig him up and ask Ezra Pound.
Because this interest is not new. I have talked to certain poets who have
told me that they try for obscurity because the general public does not
appreciate their "true qualities." They [the public] don't try to
"understand." So therefore, to heck with the public. They will write for
their own little clique. Some people feel like that. That's not true of, say,
Adrienne Rich: she and many of her cohorts do want to be, if not
"understood," at least apprehended.

Perceptions: The imagists. Do you think there is something in the imagist
philosophy that leads to obscurity?

Ms. Brooks: Not necessarily. They tried very hard to get the picture just
right. You can do that, without being totally fixated. I liked a lot of their
poetry.

Perceptions: When was the last time that you saw Adrienne Rich?

Ms. Brooks: That was a couple of years ago. She came to Chicago to read
for Poetry Magazine. She also took that occasion to scold me yet once again
for introducing poems with talk. She talks about hers to a certain extent.
But according to her, and according to Denise Levertov, you're supposed
to put the poem on the air and the listener is supposed to do whatever he
or she wants with it. Well-that's one way of looking at it.

Perceptions: Do you find Adrienne's poems too obscure?

Ms. Brooks: No, I was saying I excuse her from the obscurity-devising
category. I think she wants to be as clear as possible. Sometimes there are
complicated ideas to deal with.

Perceptions: T.S. Eliot said, "No honest poet can ever feel quite sure of the
permanent value of what he has written. He may have wasted his time
and messed up his life for nothing." What do you see as the "permanent value" of your work?

Ms. Brooks: Who said that? That doesn't sound like T.S. Eliot. Messed up his life. How can you mess up your life by writing poetry? In the late sixties there was this idea among many young Black poets that you weren't supposed to think about permanence. You were supposed to write what you felt intensely. It was to serve the kind. That was what I called, "The Hot Time." Many young people felt that they were going to change things. They really felt that they could "make a difference." Some differences were made. I don't laugh at them. I know I was certainly changed by That Time. I had not specifically addressed Blacks in many of my poems that were published in a Street of Bronzeville back in '45. In the late sixties, I consciously addressed a lot of my poems to Blacks. Many of the poets, young at that time, have changed! And now they want to write for eternity. An anthology came out in 'The Hot Time' called Black Fire. This powerful anthology was accepted as a sort of textbook for a lot of those clamoring young Blacks. There were essays in there that urged young writers to write for that time to address the Black people of that time. As I said, some of these people now want to be known as American writers. Not all of them but some of them.

Perceptions: That consciousness change seemed to come on suddenly.

Ms. Brooks: In many of the poems in A Street in Bronzeville and Annie Allen you'll find me saying very much the same thing I said in a book that came out in '68, In the Mecca. I was a "pretty decent Black" from the beginning. There were some Blacks that felt I shouldn't write one line that couldn't be understood by anyone reader or non-reader.

Perceptions: When do you think we might see the Conference That Counts? (The Conference That Counts is a conference whose aim would be to "unify" all races. She sees it as a time for each race to showcase their culture in dress, art, music, etc. See her Report From Part One.)

Ms. Brooks: You have read my autobiography, for heaven's sake! I can't foresee such a conference. Report from Part One came out in '72. Things are so different now. There was a lot of hope back then. Many Blacks had a lot of faith in themselves. Much of that has been lost. And many felt even though there wasn't an interest in integration at that time, that there would be a better way of living with whites in this country. Now, (don't you think this yourself?) there is more and more of a strain between whites and Blacks. Some people are trying to cook up some real trouble between Jews and Blacks. That is really disgusting to me because I assure you that Blacks don't spend their waking hours talking about the "horrible" Jews.

I don't think that Blacks should be concerned about integration with a capital I. I think that we ought to think of ourselves first of all as Black families interested in whatever happens to members of the family in this place or that place. We ought to think in terms of family, protecting family, assisting family and at best living peacefully with all the other people in this country. And I would call that "integration."

Perceptions: Let's return to an earlier question. What do you see as the permanent value of your work?

Ms. Brooks: I have not spent a lot of time thinking about whether my work would be permanent or not. It is pleasant to think that, centuries from now, somebody might pick up a poem of mine and actually find some nourishment in it. What I'm interested in doing is putting down on paper what I feel intensely.

Perceptions: Why do you suppose there are no present day poets with "universal" stature? Why is there no William Butler Yeats, no T.S. Eliot?

Ms. Brooks: That is right! That has been true since the death of, say, Robert Frost and T.S. Eliot. And that often puzzles me, because it seems there is just as much "inspiration" now if not more "inspiration" than there was in Eliot's time. I'll bet Eliot would quarrel about that. Perhaps people in general are more interested in computers and other aspects of technology than in books, in literature.

Perceptions: Who are the up and coming poets?

Ms. Brooks: There is Lucille Clifton, who is becoming more and more popular and is really a very passionate writer. You would love her. Yusef Komunyakaa out of Louisiana won the Pulitzer for his work last year.
And I have to mention Sterling Plumpp. Also, Rita Dove is a major technician. These are people who need more attention. Read Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol. Ocol is the husband, Lawino is the wife. She is in favor of tradition. She worships tradition. She doesn’t want anything to change. And he is just the opposite. He has complete contempt for her attitude and worships what is modern, including modern women. These books are written perfectly! Okot’k’bitek is the author. He is dead now; he was born in Uganda.

Perceptions: It has been suggested that some poets are visually-oriented (i.e. compose by image) while others are aurally-oriented (i.e. compose by sound). When you write poetry, do you find one of these considerations dominates the process?

Ms. Brooks: I’m interested in both picture and music.

Perceptions: What advice do you give young writers?

Ms. Brooks: I tell them to do a lot of reading as well as a lot of writing. I think they all ought to have journals. They’re scared of that word! OK, just plain notebooks, in which they keep what they collect every day. I tell them I don’t write a poem everyday. No! Nor a poem every week. But no day passes that I don’t cover a lot of paper with notes. Impressions of what I’ve seen and heard.

Perceptions: When you recommend something for your students to read what do you usually recommend in particular? You know Faulkner recommended three novels: Anna Karenina, Anna Karenina, and Anna Karenina. How about you?

Ms. Brooks: That was Faulkner’s ENTIRELY PERSONAL decision. It could ruin some writers (that obsession). You mean you’re asking me what I would urge them to read? If they want to be poets I would say that they ought to read Edmund Wilson’s Axel’s Castle, just so they’ll know something about symbolism and the Symbolists.

Perceptions: Axel’s Castle?

Ms. Brooks: Yes. He writes so entertainingly, and yet he knows what he is talking about. You can rely on him. And I’m sure you’d agree with me that Aspects of the Novel by E.M. Forster would be a good recommendation for anybody who is writing poetry or fiction. And I think a poet or a writer of any kind ought to be in the company sometimes of Lytton Strachey. He’s one of my favorites. Have you read Portraits in Miniature? Oh I just love those little essays. Sometimes I travel with them. And I like Portraits in Miniature much better than Eminent Victorians, his more frequently recommended book.

Perceptions: Is the virtue of the poet reflected in the poetry?

Ms. Brooks: I met Robert Frost the day before Kennedy’s inauguration. The day Kennedy was inaugurated, Frost read his poem and “lost” it in the wind. Then he read ‘The Gift Outright’ which he knew by memory. I was recording in Washington at the time [the day before Kennedy’s inauguration] and Frost came into the Poetry Room and Richard Eberhart introduced me. Eberhart was the Poetry Consultant at that time. Frost picked up a copy of Poetry Magazine and said, ‘Do you know the little book?’ He had his grandfatherly aspect at the ready that day.

Ms. Brooks closed the interview by saying, “A while ago I was so interested in what you said, ‘Oh, I’ve got a lot to read.’ So have I! There is so much that I’ll never get a chance to read.”

On one occasion before Ms. Brooks left the Gainesville area, I had the chance to talk with her again. I asked her how it felt to receive the Pulitzer. She said it was a wonderful experience, but honors and awards are not what writing is about and that writing is what she would be doing whether or not she ever received any kind of recognition or awards for her work.

I believe her. Ms. Brooks won the hearts of everyone at her reading. For such an esteemed writer she was so accessible--approachable. She wasn’t a queen. She has experienced stratification as a Black, as a woman, and even for not having “good” hair. And for these experiences—we get intimate with humanity through reading work by a person who has her heart toward human-kindness and her pen activated by the contemporary pulse of human nature.
lemuel appling is planning to transfer to Mercer College where he will pursue a Bachelor's in English. He enjoys writing.

candice brancato is a student from Great Britain who recently married. She lives with her husband and son in Gainesville. She is an English major and hopes to attend Georgia State University.

marion j. darracott is a journalism student and currently the Director of Security at Gainesville College. He enjoys writing poetry and is presently trying to get his two novels published.

micki licciardi is an English major at Gainesville College. She and her husband and their two daughters live in Oakwood.

bobbie lock is an English major. He resides in Gainesville.

jennie mcdonald is a secondary education-English major who will soon be transferring to Georgia State University. She resides in Gainesville with her husband and their son.

rosemarie sauers currently enjoys English, history, and physical education classes in her spare time. She incorporates her travel in her stories.

marleen springston lives with her husband and two sons. She plans to be an English professor and writer.

jon thompson is a bassist, comic book artist, writer, and a history major who will be transferring to the University of Georgia in the fall.

helen wallington writes short fiction and poetry. She plans to pursue a career in publishing.

contributors