



Phillip Miler

Distinguished Kansas Poet

Phillip Miler graduated from Wyandotte High School, Kansas City, KS, in 1961, then received a BA and MA from Emporia St. University 1961-1966 (then Emporia St. Teachers College). While there he studied with Keith Denniston and was editor of Quivira.

Miller worked at Kansas City KS Community College from 1976 until 2002. While at KCKCC, he coordinated the college's Basic English program for over 20 years, served as professor of English, taught creative writing, composition, and American literature (in the PACE program).

He was president of the Kansas Writers Association, 1987, and hosted their statewide conference. In 1992, Miller was a founding member, then board member and now is an advisory member of The Writers Place, KCMO. He directed the Riverfront Reading Series from 1987 to 2004.

Miller's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in a number of journals, including Kansas Quarterly, New Letters, Cottonwood, Poetry, and Rattapallax, Coal City Review, The I-70 Review, Thorny Locust, Home Planet News, Literary Magazine Review, The Mid-American Review, Poetry Wales, and Gargoyle. His sixth book of poems, *The Casablanca Fan*, is being published by Unholy Day Press. Miller also co-edited an anthology of ghost poems, *A Chance of a Ghost*, from Helicon Nine Editions.

Retiring in 2002, he now lives in Mount Union, PA where he edits *The Same* and co-directs the Aughwick Poet and Writers Reading Series.

Driving Through Kansas in Late Autumn

First you see
tar paper, clapboard, old red barn,
yellow trees against a sky
smeared gray.
Then these catch your eye:
tip of weathervane, slow
blade of windmill slicing
air, hawk's slant wing,
curve of crow,
windrow of dishwater hay;
rusty bristleweed, rooster comb
of dry sumac,
a stand of cattle splotched
eggshell, coal, burnt sienna,
before your eyes blur,
let landscape slide
to dusky field and ditch,
to umber, ash, and teal,
to thin streak of rouge,
to one long wash of bruise.

Previously published in *Modern Images*

Great Winds, Great Rains

Everything wears out, wears down.
Hair thins, the bald head shines,
the skull slowly surfaces.
One day you'll watch your body
walk away from its former self,
a snake shedding the ghost
of what it was, a flimsy curiosity
blowing into great winds,
dissolving in great rains.
And you'll become your own ghost
peering into a mirror,
noticing what you've come to,
that you've gained invisibility,
found higher ground,
and you'll know where you are
and where you cannot stay for long.
You'll turn toward the window
(catching a reflection
you'll see right through)
and watch hurricanes rip clouds
across a bone-white moon,
thin as a clipped fingernail,
and watch tornados howl and boil
and cold rains fall.

(Previously published in *From the Temperate Zone*,
Potpourri Press, co-authored with Keith Denniston)



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God!

I'm in trouble again,
something unexpected like the death
of someone I've fastened a bit
of connective tissue to,
and now I must consider
the fact of my own demise
the slow shedding like a skin
of my tough exterior
until I've become over-sensitive
to the weather and the dark,
to the ordinary passing of the day:
now I sense a pressure
as if time were rubbing
my cheeks the wrong way,
as if, with the strong arms
of a god, it were pushing me along,
my face against the wind
until I can feel my own wearing,
the way a boulder dissolves
in a river's swift current
as slowly as long afternoons seemed
to wear away when I was young
and held the dazzling sun
inside my hard gaze
and for a moment,
as if I were a god myself,
made it stand still.

Previously published in *Branches Snapping*,
Helicon Nine Editions, and *Poetry*

Be That As It May

A hot wind that day,
and no rain for weeks:
my mother's voice,
impatient, shifts the subject,
her iced coffee tinkling
in a tall glass,
an eyebrow raised
at Grandpa's ruminations
of how things have changed:
morals, manners, not to mention
the weather, the price of coffee
and cigarettes.
It is the way she turns away
like a cat turns from a pair
of too anxious eyes,
as I did then, escaping,
but listening from a shadowy corner,
wrinkling my face,
saying a word or two
that would have added to Grandpa's
disillusion had he heard—
all this fifty years ago.
The way my mother clears her throat,
having heard the world is about to end,
and widens her eyes,
and as if opening a window
says, "Be that as it may,"
and suggests a walk in the garden
to see—with the drought upon us—
what is left.

Previously published in *The Pittsburgh Quarterly*

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