

Western Kentucky University
Department of English presents...

The 25th Annual

Mary Ellen & Jim Wayne Miller *Celebration of Writing*



The Mary Ellen and Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing is a contest hosted annually by WKU and is open to students with an English major or minor as well as those in creative writing classes.

The contest is named after Dr. Jim Wayne Miller who taught German at WKU for over thirty years until his death in 1996, and his wife, Professor Mary Ellen Miller, who taught poetry and literature at WKU for 55 years until her death in 2018. A writer in many genres, Dr. Miller would be best known for his poetry and numerous books, including: *Copperhead Cane* (1964), *The Mountains Have Come Closer* (1980), and *Newfound* (1989). Professor Miller was also well-known for her poetry. She published many poems, as well as the collection, *The Poet's Wife Speaks* (2011). Together with Morris Allen Grubbs, she also published *Every Leaf a Mirror: A Jim Wayne Miller Reader* (2014).

Past prize winners include...

- “Observer Effect” — Andrew Bergman
- “John Lennon: A Day in the Rye” — Derek Ellis
- “Athena’s Birth and Others Like It” — David Haydon
- “Portrait of a Bowl of Beans” — Michaela Miller
- “Mother Tongue” — Alicyn Newman

To donate to the celebration, supporters may make gifts through the WKU Foundation at WKU:
292 Alumni Avenue, Bowling Green, 42101
or at alumni.wku.edu/millerwritingfund

October 31, 2021
Kentucky Museum



Program

Introductions.....Dr. Alison Langdon

Welcoming Remarks.....Dr. Rob Hale

Students Winners Announced.....Amy Wright

From “Paper Concert,” by.....Amy Wright

Closing Remarks.....Dr. Alison Langdon

Contest Finalists

“And Then...” by Adam Woodward

“Deciding on a Blue Bird” by Catherine Sheffield

“My Own Religion” by Elizabeth Roth

“Mother” by Emma Mehmedovic

“A Liar’s Guide to Fitting in” by Seth Nevin

“Eugeo Cards and Sister Love” by Haley Eller

“March 11, 2020” by Justin Harris

“My Nana Relearned Life at Sixty” by Kayla Spears

“Lilium Orientals” by Lily Ford

“Pray to the Skunk” by Samuel Chumbley

“Flick” by Sydney Selems

A Poem for Readers of Poems

by Mary Ellen Miller

All bundled up in leftover wrappings
of all my hours and yours*
stale but warm to sleep and dream
(meaning yours and yours and yours).

Now I have to go to the bathroom.

WARNING: This is the story of my life.

I have found:
Nothing matters at all,
unless it's old and done in orderly fashion.

Cave drawings are carved on my skull.
There's a list in the files:
first, antelope
then, the bison.

I warned you and you kept on reading.

Now you know why—some of the time—
I love the world and all that's in it.

But mostly I love you—
patient, forgiving—
who start and end
wishing me well.

Harvest

by Jim Wayne Miller

Now his whole life seemed weathered and old-fashioned.
When others spoke, their words made pictures
with gleaming surfaces and metal trim.
He spoke drafty pole barns and garden plots.
His customs had a mustiness, a smokehouse mold
about them; his shriveled wisdom hung like peppers
and shuckybeans from a cabin rafter.
Beliefs leaned back like doors with broken hinges,
stood sunken like a rotten springhouse roof.

Still, he thought of songs landlocked two hundred
years, living in coves and hollers, far from
home, by creeks and waterfalls, and springdrain
trickles—songs that still remembered the salt salt sea
and held all past time green in the month of May
and made all love and death and sorrow sweet.

So he wasn't sad to see his life gathered
up in books, kept on a shelf like dry seeds
in an envelope, or carried far off
like spanish needles in a fox's fur.
His people brought the salt sea in their songs;
now they moved mountains to the cities
and made all love and death and sorrow sweet there.
Heaviness was always left behind
to perish, to topple like a stone chimney.

But what was lightest lasted, lived in song.