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## A Lesson on the Twentieth Century

Miller Williams

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# A Lesson on the Twentieth Century

by Miller Williams

They rode around in auto-mobiles,  
metal sitting rooms that sat on wheels  
and coursed a network of concrete  
laid down by labor, a grid of street across street  
inside the cities, and on the countryside  
long winding ribbons sometimes laid so wide  
eight of the units could run along together,  
half going one direction and half the other.  
The engines that powered them were built to burn  
the residue of ancient life. You'll learn  
now if you will activate your screens  
how the drivers of these ingenious machines  
could shift the ratios of their mechanical gears.  
A lot of things have altered over the years  
since nations went to war for gods and lands  
and things lived in the oceans and there were bands  
of people who used their own breath and hands  
to make their music. All this was long before  
we freed ourselves from fretting about chance  
and learned not to walk too close to the shore  
or think about things like dolphins anymore.

