

Graveyard beside Whitesville Road

In March, snorting bulldozers and lumber cutters ripped out slash pines, kudzu, Virginia creeper, and prickly briars, piled them on mud-colored trucks and hauled them away.

In April, earth-eating, grunting monsters tore into the land making great hills one day, long orange ridges with shadowy valleys of death the next. Better than ninety acres wedged between the bypass and Interstate just behind the new Publix, Big B Drugs and TCBY.

Now it's May. For sale signs are up. In a forgotten parcel, seventeen gravestones huddle in weeds, a twenty-by-forty-foot plot behind a rusted wrought iron fence someone put there to mark the place. Traffic whirls by these seventeen Fortsons, Blanchards, and Johnsons, side by side like rectangular blocks in a kindergarten.

It's an ugly garden of graves beside an uglier tract where Cineplex and Megatown will grow before long. All that remains of a farm— a home where Johnsons, Blanchards and Fortsons lived un-airconditioned lives, fields where fat black and white cattle ate sweet grass, a murky gully where blotchy pigs rooted for rotten crabapples,

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woods deep with sweet gum, and water oak, and
white pine,
 where children played hide-and-seek,
 and mumbledepeg,
 where Ivy Blanchard was kissed by a stranger
 in broad daylight,
 and Jack Fortson's hound ran off one night
 and was never seen again.

James Brewbaker
Flint River Review (1997)

**Jim Brewbaker's Explanation
of "Graveyard beside Whitesville Road"**

Columbus, Georgia, has undergone much growth in the past few years. When I saw this sad little graveyard being overwhelmed by "progress" in the form of a new mall, it saddened me. I made a point one day of stopping there and taking pictures of the graves.

The poem is simultaneously descriptive of what I saw that day and speculative. What was life like for those who had lived on that farm fifty or one hundred years ago? How did they pass their days, their "un-airconditioned lives"? In my mind's eye, I could see that tract in earlier, simpler times.