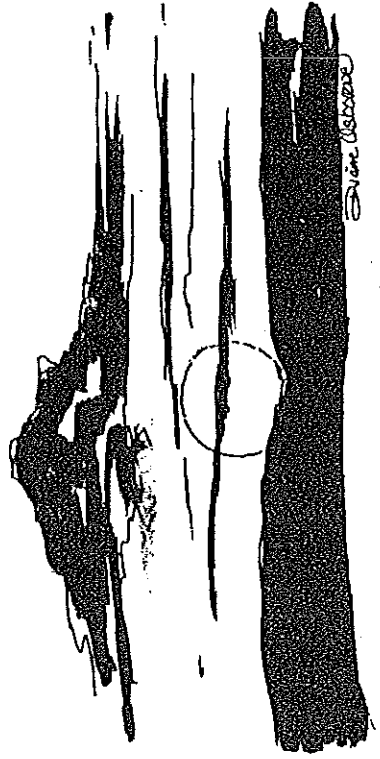


An Evening Fantasy

Black silhouettes they stand,
A purple black against the summer sky,
Like sleeping giants whose huge mass
Has quenched the brilliance of the setting sun.
Mountains, Mountains
That in their blackness form
Weird shapes that show another world.
The blue infinity above their crest
Has decked herself in raiment
Of rich tinted clouds,
A proper gown in which to bid goodby
To the departing day.
Night comes, and with its blackness
Blots out all perspective
And pastes the somber giant forms
Against the summer sky.

John Blaker Herod



Ramps

Trimming back a band of brittle hydrangeas
I am assaulted by a surge of airborne garlic set free
as I cut into deep green jagged fronds that invaded
spaces left when the hydrangeas died back to stalks.
*That's ramps, Mary had said ten years earlier.
Not garlic, ramps. Back home when the ramps come in
you can smell the mountain kids at school fifty feet away.
Ramps gets in your pores—stays with you for weeks.*

*Polly and Mike gave 'em to me, I told her.
They said they found garlic gone wild at a farmhouse
someone bulldozed for the Walmart.
Must've been a garden back then.*

Rubbing a torn leaf, I inhale, recall another cold morning
fifteen years past when I tucked a dozen smelly fat bulbs
into a corner of my postage-stamp plot and forgot them.

Once, though, they grew fat in another man's plot
and in early spring got into his pores and the pores of his children
who ate them with fat pork, maybe, and pungent collards.

West Virginians knew ramps, they still do
Georgians don't
Cherokees and Creeks, gone, knew ramps
the book says so
Georgians don't

I toss the wounded leaf aside and grab pruning shears
wondering about a Georgian who grew ramps anyway
grew collards and raised pigs, lived and died or moved away
in the time before the Walmart came to our town.

James M. Brewbaker