

The Old Man of the Mountains
(for Charles Steger)

In Autumn there is no question
Why they are called "The Smokies"
Clouds trickle away from the trees
As if the birds in awakening
Fluffed their beds

Or maybe the Old Man of the Mountain
After a good breakfast
Of grits and bacon and fresh layed hen eggs
Lit his pipe

Some when scrambling along the floor:
The baby skunks, the mice, the squirrels, the little fawns
And even the fish
Start their day:
While possums and the others go off to sleep

I wish I were a Possum
But I have classes to teach

In Autumn the leaves fall
And turn
And ultimately trees will be bare
Awaiting the snows of winter

It's all so beautiful
And quiet
And we are a part of it
Because someone had vision
To see we must take
Care of ourselves
By our service
To others

Ut Prosiium more
Gently defined
is:
That I may enhance your life
And so

We try

Nikki Giovanni
University Distinguished Professor