

Still December Maryland

Ron Pronk

Nothing redeems like a walk
through still December Maryland.
I used to wax the runners of
my Flexible Flyer, then glide
between glass trees
on slow rolling hills
with snow resting like
lazy clouds, through air
filled with wood smoke and sparrows.

My mother had sad dreams of
dying alone in a big cold house
built for children. She would feel
the house grow as she shrank. I was too young
to know why she hugged me and said she did not
want to see past fifty.

When I moved west I could not stop seeing in
the dry hot wind and dust
her dreams and my past wrestling
alone, together in our big house.

So I've come back to walk
through December Maryland.
Tomorrow I will tear apart
the Flexible Flyer still hanging
on the garage wall.

From the splintered pieces I will build
a small house
and nail it to the dormant maple
near her grave. I want her to see it
filled with sparrows.

Conflict of the Cord and Oak

Ron Pronk

Around the bark of a high yard oak
just below the first fork
a white clothesline's been wrapped
twice tightly.

I know the cord is newly placed
since it clings fully exposed, and an oak
won't tolerate that for long.

I can't say why an oak feels compelled
to swallow whatever girds its bark
for more than a season. Perhaps
it's some inward knowledge, useful
only to oaks, of the strangling habits of ivy.

It's this insolvable problem that draws me
to wrapped oaks: Nowhere on the surface
whether in leaf, branch, bark or root, is a hint apparent
how this hulking vegetable knows
of proper caution against something
only I can distinguish
however uselessly.