

Catoctin Mountain Park

He who thus considers things in their first growth and origin, whether a state or anything else, will obtain the clearest view of them.

—Aristotle, *Politics* (translated by Benjamin Jowett)

Look out across
the ridges of trees
flushed red
as if holding
their breath
to blue distance,
a wager made
with the sky.

Look out over
the Appalachians'
eastern rampart,
then scrap the word for parts—
before, prepare, fortify—
to take possession of again.

On the road in, two wild
turkeys bustle off into
the brush.

Off the trail in wet leaves,
yellow eyes of a box turtle.

What I take
to be the stripes
of common shiner
in a riffle.

Alone, one might intone
whose woods, whose woods,
one might whisper
democratic vistas.

One might say
summit and *Summit*,
as elsewhere, but near,
are Aristotle's other
animals—political—
at fenced and guarded
leisure, though the wind

passes as it pleases,
and when it shakes
the trees, it is not
an agreement at all.

Credit:

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About this Poem:

"In writing about Catoctin Mountain Park, I found myself wanting to capture the spatial experience of the park, which enables different modes of attention—both the broad and reflective attention warranted by overlooks and 'wide shots,' and the 'close shots' as one notices wildlife and natural details underfoot and alongside. A third kind of attention I wanted to engage was that of the creative mind loosed in a body in motion through a natural landscape. The mind responds to the natural stimuli associatively—in my case, through personification, etymological associations and word play, and literary connections (the 'whose woods' of Frost and the 'democratic vistas' of Whitman). I hoped that readers aware of Camp David's close proximity to the park would let that presence complicate and contextualize the poem from its epigraph to its final stanza. Aristotle's thoughts on man as the 'political animal' enabled me to sustain this connection."

— *Dora Malech*

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Dora Malech is the author of *Say So* (Cleveland State University Poetry Center, 2010) and *Shore Ordered Ocean* (Waywiser Press, 2009).

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