

## Autumn

The earth is turning its sunburnt cheek  
toward our eyes, showing its deepest red foliage  
at the tops of maples, the wide-awake yellows  
filling our field of vision in the birch groves,  
pulling the sap inward for another season.

Has it been a year already, we asked each other  
on our ride through the mountains  
to catch the fading sun on these shortened days.  
When we were young we lay for hours in the dry  
mouldering piles of crackling leaves, our rakes  
leaned against the trunks of trees, we laughing and  
telling stories that we would never again remember  
or tell. What we remember is the smell of earth  
in those leaves and how we felt so much alive  
in those bright piles of season's end.

And today, too, we stop and wade ankle-deep  
in the still-bright leaves gathered on the forest floor,  
seeing our breath in the morning sunlight air,  
removing a leafy fragment from our hair, brushing off  
twigs that hold us, and we talk again about things of  
little consequence in the presence of a world too big  
for us to understand, cradled in its last warm leaves of the season.