

## In the White Mountains

All these trees and leaves, and each bears  
no resemblance to any other. I'd have to describe  
each one. And because the wind gusts up or the sun  
disappears behind a cloud, I'd need to update  
every description by the minute, a task  
harder than Monet's. Then there's the matter  
of imperceptible decay, of obsolescence, winter  
due to arrive any second.

Perhaps if I stayed with color,  
the yellows and oranges, the russets,  
occasional purples, and, of course, the greens,  
the partly greens, greens closer to yellow,  
a full spectrum of hue, all manners of comparisons possible:  
to gourds and squashes, citrus and grain,  
to flame and flowers, stars I've yet to learn to name.  
And naming the colors - ochre, cadmium, citron, chrome -  
might make it more specific, might arrest,  
for an instant, autumn's dazzling passage.

As if that's what I'm after: language's momentary stasis.  
As if the adjectives for leaves I labor with -  
dappled, mottled, marbled, splotched - might keep  
this gold-disked birch from squandering all its currency.  
It's not enough: reaching into the jeweler's bag,  
stretching for the anvil of the metalsmith,  
all those pavés, mosaics, and cloisonnés to capture  
this luminosity, this voracious clarity  
of unnameable golden light.

On this white escarpment I've dragged  
my shadow to, at this confluence of yellow mountain  
and blue inveterate sky, against this elaborate dialogue  
where no boundaries blur, and nothing obfuscates  
to what end beneath their golden splendor these trees will come,  
I recognize this attempt at description  
as elegy, lament.  
But nothing dying needs to be so lavish.  
Nothing dying needs such fire.  
It's the living I stand before, this ferocious burning.