

Caveat

by [Joel Showalter](#) in the [January 31, 2018](#) issue

To be completely clear:  
the trees are not on fire.  
No flame blazes so brilliantly,  
so capriciously, as these  
dying leaves, dyed like the heads  
of high school girls and boys,  
impossible hues, stolen from  
spring and summer's storeroom:  
goldfinch feather, dahlia petal,  
fragrant peel of clementine.

I think of the prophet and  
the burning bush, and wonder  
whether we have long misunderstood  
the miracle: a bit of bramble  
in the wilderness, lit up  
perhaps by color, not by fire.  
Would such a sight not call out  
to any one of us, as if by name?

And oh, my restless heart,  
how like these trees you are!  
How is it that you burn, and burn,  
and yet are not consumed?