

VEINS AND CAROTENE PIGMENT IN A MAPLE LEAF

These are my channels,
my tiny canals,
my lightning for water, skeleton of vessels
for the push of the sea
that unfurled the buds
on my parent tree and spread me
silken and flimsy at first
to sun and to rain and wind.
Ah my incredible network —
intricate as the eyes' capillaries —
what miles of it in a forest!
Were it a writing
what books it would fill,
what arboreal libraries
repeating the same live fact.
Now I am old, my chlorophyll gone,
I blaze out in red like the hair of a feisty woman,
in the late splendour of the carotene.
I shall soon be dead
and the winter tree will forget me,
already dreaming of spring
and the aerial miles of green.

