The Burning

Paul Kratoska*
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by Paul Kratoska

English, Sr.

It is only because I was here once before
That I walk here slowly now,
Crumbling leaves in my fingers.

It would all be new again
If I walked back into that time,
Banged the door with its black, sagging screen
And crawled through the leaves behind the bushes.

It was dirt and smoke and dust
When we burned in the autumn winds,
And the flower heads were heavy with seed.

If I return to this place,
With ashes drifting in the evening sky
And children poking at a dying fire,
It is only because I was here once before.