

The "feeling" was setting in once more  
I knew it was time to go.  
For, when anticipation is the catalyst of rejection and confidence comes in pints and fifths,  
your only escape is physical.  
No one conquers the "feeling." It conquers you,  
it is a plague, that spreads within a man  
and sows the seed of doubt in the furrows of ability.  
Its antidote is solitude.  
Its cure is the sleep.

Michael Moore

## MY AUTUMNS

Karlis Rusa

Now that the falling of the year is with us again, my thoughts naturally turn to remembrances of past autumns. This latter season of the year has a personal, albeit rather nebulous, significance for me.

It is true that I cannot remember having had any especially vivid autumnal impressions during childhood. Nevertheless, at least two different aspects of the season were clear to me: bitterly cold and rainy days, and still-warm days of quickly fading sun and of revels among myriads of dry leaves.

It was not until about three years ago that I first really opened my senses to autumn. I observed the magical quiteness of early mornings when all is covered with a thin layer of frost. I saw reminiscences of summer in the still-blooming marigolds and petunias, undaunted by cold nights. And I marveled at a slowly forming sense of adventure, inexplicably brought on by the smell of distant burning leaves and the

sight of a golden-brown haze surrounding far trees like an aureole.

This was a time of long bicycle rides and walks down roads where overhead and underfoot were only leaves, leaves, leaves. There was sun-drenched weather, and there was grey and bleak weather, during which the leaves decayed almost visibly. There were nights of deep darkness, and nights of clear cold stars. The strange mood that was by now a part of me was heightened when I discovered certain tales by Ray Bradbury, whose concept of "the October Country"—"where noons go quickly, dusks and twilights linger, and midnights stay"—worked on me like a charm. It cannot be denied that the impressions I received therefrom were mostly macabre, and for some time I fancifully imagined goblins scurrying through the leaves.

A year afterward, I came upon J.R.R. Tolkien's *Fellowship of the Ring*, where, in places, are presented other splendors of autumn. Here I found strange and beautiful imagery, with murmuring willows listlessly losing their golden foliage, and light mists gathering on the edges of autumnal forests at evening. My viewpoint now was quietly freed of its Halloween-like tinge, which was supplanted by a mystical conception of Elves wandering through the leafy land of mythic Eriador.

By this time hopelessly (but happily) romantic in all my thinking, I began to cultivate a taste for straying outdoors on autumn nights. One such walk will linger long in my memory.

It was a gloomy November evening, already quite dark. The air was warm for the time of year, and I recall its strangely comforting wetness. I walked slowly and aimlessly through little silent alleys and streets, from shadow into shadow. Then for a long time I stood beneath a tree now bare of leaves, its wet branches outstretched in the ghostly light of a solitary street lamp a few feet away. I hardly know what thoughts and images passed through my mind as I stood there, inhaling the pleasant dampness.

Such were the ingredients of a scene (I can scarcely call it an episode) about which I think often. Each year now I enter into a slightly different mood as autumn comes around to its place in the cycle of seasons. Each year I notice some aspect of autumn that I have not known before. Yet, I have never tried to determine *why* that season holds a peculiar meaning for me. I have joy in subjectivity, and I will always have joy in the various shades in weather, color, and atmosphere that are part of autumn.