Colors

I
In the fall, the old maple in my backyard
went from green and yellow to deep red.
The red was there all along,
waiting to be revealed
as the green vanished.

II
When Newton coined the word spectrum,
he based it on spectre: a ghost
of seven colors that appears
when white light breaks up.
As the sun sets,
the ghost scatters,
leaving only red on the horizon.

III
The first eye sprouted
on a swimmer in the primordial sea
some five hundred million years ago,
and right away it was drawn to its prey,
creatures flashing red.

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