Valley of the Rio Chama
—near Ghost Ranch, Rio Grande Institute

The River, small at Fall, drifts through cottonwoods, greypinkblue hills, dropping slowly down past Abiquiu, Española on its way to the sea leaves, twigs, pieces of the mountain life upstream carried along like picture postcards, or paintings All this great flow, color, wind, light is center that has to be something deeply anciently holy:

the leaves are masks, the twigs dancing legs and arms, held spun to the beat of River and an earth swirling under the weakening autumnal sun of harvest promise before the high mountain winter comes with its own icy mask

Most of us here today are artists of some sort, all caught embarrassed before this magnificence, these glories of canyons, bluffs carved into standing hooded figures, multicolored giant crayons the sun has melted until they stand layer upon layer in rich pastel, as if a prism had broken strewing raw light into colors, freezing them there in sandstone clay

We walk away, murmur to each other of the weather, our small arts, our tiny worlds of imitation, longing that only we can inhabit.
My new friend, a painter, says, “I’m old enough to know better than to try painting all that!” and shakes his head. But colors are words the voices of rock and canyon speak. How can they not be spoken? How can we not listen?

—seeing the stream, hearing the leaves golden and brown in their own falling splendor, earth holding all in Her cupped hands of rock and color and light.