**Vincent**

The one-eared chipmunk I had fed so many times

last year from my hand, so close I could study

the tumid wound where his left ear had been,

the sucking flies stuck to his striped back,

the tiny toenails manicured by rocks,

did not return this year,

and I imagined all the calamities that chipmunk

flesh is heir to: the silent dive of the red-shouldered hawk,

the neighbor’s wily calico, the fox whose baby-squeal

electrifies the night, and even plain old age,

which is never far off for a chipmunk.

And I blamed myself for taming him

to the point he trusted this indentation

in the big stone atop the wall,

that despite his palpitating heart he might have

let down his fidgety guard because of our daily routine.

And so now, when he does appear, three weeks late,

ear hole now healed, and clambers over the rocks

and into my hand, all four feet, even pausing

to eat one of the black seeds as I hold him aloft,

what choice do I have but to stop,

breathe deeply in the palm of the present,

to shuck what isn’t and savor what is?