

Folk Art

Eve Fisher

I've been watching squirrels all winter.

They grow them big and red and fast up here,
racing up and down the tree trunks,
out the branches, around the yard.

Little prints, baby hands with claws,
scrambling on the snow.

They're never still unless it rains.

Sitting with their fat tails
flipped over their heads,
scratching nervously until they can race again.

In the lilac trees right now,
five feet up and glowing gold,
is a corncob stashed a month ago
by a hustling squirrel with great balance.
He dragged it up the sidewalk, into the yard —
God knows where he got it —
up that two-inch trunk and wedged it,
damned near falling off himself,
wedged it in so tight
even last week's blizzard couldn't budge it
even when the tree was scraping ground.

And then he scampered off.

I laughed, and talked of rodent folk art,
spare and simple, enigmatic and serene.

But it's still there.

The squirrels race each other all around the yard
and up every tree but that.

He hasn't been near it since.

No squirrel, no bird,

Not a breath has touched it.

They know an altar when they see one.