

## Run-Over Squirrel

We stop not because he's dead, but because he's dead on  
Vernon Street, where so little happens outside houses.  
Because he's broken open—

scarlet, vermillion? Here we stand at the edge  
of the visible spectrum, a man and a woman  
out for a walk in the black pastures

of the murderous suburbs. The squirrel, an old-world  
sacrifice, draws us out of our bodies, out  
of our separate minds. It must

have just happened, given the chromatic  
collision of beauty and violence. Arsenic,  
the covert ingredient in fifteenth century

Venetian red. By the sixteenth the Aztecs'  
cochineal, parasitic insect, crushed  
the European dye market. Cabbalistic,

cryptic red, reserved for cardinals, princes, bankers,  
courtesans. Translated through a Vernon Street  
window: sun-shot shoulder, flash

of a satin strap. The squirrel's blood now a hit-  
and-run red. I finger my  
dangling ruby earring like a rosary.