

Confession

How strange it is the way a symbol may enter your life
during the silent moment, the hollow space, of prayer.

After confessing yet again a loss of patience, a harsh word,
you hear the sound of a rat scraping in the wall of the room

and you recognize then the perfect emblem of your misery.
Your carcass, your very skin, is riddled with shortcoming

precisely in the way your house is riddled with vermin.
The scraping persists, as though the rat were gnawing

on your bone instead of the ribs of the house, scratching
at some deeper rottenness you never knew existed.

What is it, you wonder, this uneasiness, this creature within,
determined at all cost to live and multiply. It has a name.

If only you could guess it you might finally know peace.
You wonder whether this, too, is the voice of some angel.

—Doug Talley