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The Raccoon's Petition

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The Raccoon's Petition

*Men are the devils of the earth, and the animals are
the tormented souls. —Schopenhauer*

The raccoon hangs on a wooden rack
in the back of a pickup truck
Its body fixed and frozen
Stretched taut for drying
a wet and stiffening rag
Eyes sealed shut its small mouth clenched tight it
seems holding in white plastic button
Teeth broken from eating desperately
at metal

The black and white segmented tail streaked
red from raccoon blood running
Down its sides swings back and forth in the wind
leaving thin and tortile lines
Like the words an infant traces

I would read them if I could
I would read about walking on the soles
of my feet heels close to ground my nose wet
pressed tight to dirt smelling
Rabbit

I would read of turning eggs over and over
picking for breaks
Of washing on rocks of swimming of climbing up
trees
Of sleeping

I would read about
Suddenly
pulling and kicking at
Air
Of feeling something like cold
gnawing deep in the folds
of my brain
Of leaving my tail behind
crying

I would read of old trails that I
furtively follow until my nose fills
Torpids with death and I
Fall
my skin collapsing around me

I would read about creatures that suck at my soul
I would read about heaven
I would read about hell
I would read of its devils

—Thomas Lavoie