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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