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The Lesson

Ronaldo Wilson

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THE LESSON

Ronaldo Wilson

. . . I was not born to be forced . . .
—Henry Thoreau

. . . I'm a prisoner with the others . . .
—Tom Sleigh

*

Does it begin by force? To transcend
thatches of skin, one face like another
cliniqued and carbunched

with slacks,

transfix the great heart:

art is equal to blood is equal to the savage that you aren't.
In the abyss, you sing *I am clear. I am all parts of the whole.*
I am the whole. Where
do you fit?

Do you never want to break out
dancing in the middle of a crowded room:
or is the organic you a fine wisp, a god
of good hair, a saint shot out to space?

*

When the wind pushes against my house
and it feels like it might fall into itself,
I am a cardhouse.

On *Real T.V.*, in a suburb, caught on video
white teens sledgehammer
the toilets and tubs of a friend.

In the trail of boric acid I lay out for the roaches,
do the vermin know bleach, flour—they are about to be killed?

How do you know by force
or equation a chasm, a magnet

a soul

or by what word is beauty—

begin with being a bore
or being bore through in a market,
the surprise, each time, in being called, *sir*.

*

Side B: aesthetic theory—Your skin is pink,
then opaque, carmelized then burned
if you are one of the drumsticks
stuffed in a bowl, as in holocaust.

NYTimes, East Timor. A blown apart leg unskinned,
a shoe's sole ripped back to bone, synonym
for torso in a soccer shirt.

This is ours. We are pickled, you
and me with this strange leg.

Should I turn the chicken over?

See your life as screenic,
think collage,
ethnograph—He is your brown body.

Buy chanel, egoiste,
a black border. When I turn the page: *crack*
the bone and scrape out the marrow
for marinade.

You do not fall from the sky
en route to Paris, but die in the flash flood
mud with the others.

Salamanders roil. The silverbacks
peep out of their jungle.

Finally, the deserved. Your body laid without
a listerined and living mouth.

*

How to love the wisp of your face,
the not watching out
the knowing in being clear
and white:

Not on the margin
nor pushed out
on smack, on safari, I am
an ellipsis.

I do not come in peace
for the flesh that stinks
of the heart and bone you've devoured.

Transcend: I am a face
ready to cut into you
stalagmites by fist.

Think of razors, think
of obsidian, think
of how and where we begin.

