

**FREE CLEAN FILL DIRT**

For *Oily Doily*, *Garden Party*, *Excisions*, and *Aye Aye*

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*In every part of every living thing  
is stuff that once was rock*

—Lorine Niedecker

*I suppose you suppose that yon of little burial  
Is non of? Rather it is of universal o'er.  
Unvast because it unvast looks?  
Well, how wrong sir.*

—Russell Atkins

## SEVERANCE CENTER

Is that part  
of the stem—the  
one that bends—  
around the pole—stood  
there now decades  
ago—the stem that  
mended obstruction by  
humbly *arounding*—shooting through  
it—is it  
then—that stem—*evidence*—  
of memory or  
an antenna?            Alien force  
for sure tasked  
to twist about the  
ruin of what's  
been reckless (this city's  
past's past's making)—  
growth a mark of  
unreasonable season—growth  
showing where a wild  
coyote walked kingly  
down the street at  
dawn            No            Wait  
*Wild* is wrong            You

didn't see it  
There can't be any  
longer wild                      Wild  
is the one that  
lives inside watching  
from the window what  
is wilder still  
than him—with vigilance  
You touch him  
thinking most creatures can't  
believe can't recall  
their own beginning                      Ends  
we witness—but  
that stem started long  
before you thought  
to meet it—and  
around it bends—  
born in cement                      Have  
you put a  
face to your enemy?  
Have you sat  
in séance?                      Have you  
asked your dead  
what way yet?                      Have  
you finished accounting?  
Will you pack your  
belongings?                      Would you  
ever even do that?  
What would you

do?                    HD said “we  
look through a  
window into the world  
of pure over-mind”  
and—like a cap—  
it shadows us  
It keeps us—so  
she said—connected  
to a deep internal  
discerning consciousness                    A  
seawall—underwater lens it  
rests over perception  
like a jellyfish                    Veil  
or vision molten  
blurring of the external  
world in service  
of something undeclared                    Dense  
prediction                    Too far  
withdrawn to convey that  
the conventional means  
of making is  
taking                    Are you inside  
or outside                    Tenacious  
or troubling                    Outside today  
not far away  
further violence                    The text  
says stay away  
don’t congregate don’t engage  
but dread cocoons

It weaponizes context                      So  
you ask your  
map (the alphabet) for  
further instruction                      Introduction  
Some direction                      A reclamation  
Are you inside  
or outside?                      Are you  
yourself well?                      What  
is the memory of  
a stem?                      *Its*  
*bend*                      Where will you  
go when you  
leave here?                      What has  
this city's past's  
past abandoned?                      The gazebo  
The observatory                      Exhaust  
You are trying to  
think but *that*  
*sound*—that sound not  
strong—not a  
train or a shot  
Not a wail  
or a clock                      That  
pitch                      There is  
something in the way  
of the thought  
You are revolving around  
it—*stop growling*

## ORDINARY STRATA (CLEVELAND)

Vacant IHOP's stripped sign more legible than it was with lights

Man sneezing into a stranger's mouth

Man returning a box of opened condoms

Man in pastel scrubs cradling his crotch at the crossing

We claim the dead branch is integral to the structure of the tree

Unscooped stoops start a parade in the streets

Tall ships come to port in June

## ORDINARY STRATA (PALMER SQUARE)

Aim toward the sharpest phrase

Amidst disarray

Winter's arms wild legs akimbo squeak

Sculpture of a hand gripping the base of a tree

Poster about rats in the alley

Police won't follow up

Beetles having eaten through the bark as impetus

## SATURDAY

According to the stranger

first ice sheets

will thaw sea levels

will rise you

read the stranger said

to heights unheard

of shores will smother

previous neighbors no

one will weather well

the earth's peevish

heat will increase air

itself septic streets

and bridges unbearable                      Oh

the old ready

routes—the routes of

childhood—routes of

recall now a dream

unnavigable                      What was

the way you once

would take to

call on the one

you loved—which

way did it begin

again it's gone—

awe intact perhaps but  
face it the  
stranger said we're going  
to need new  
ideas you read we're  
going to need  
new strategies tactics for  
endurance                      Don't ruminate  
on sinkholes water supplies  
toxins massive unknowable  
truly undividable fractures in  
the brittle tectonic  
masses                      Oh delicate underworld  
Oh green child  
You once played orphanage  
What is this  
game and did you  
play it                      It's  
orphanage                      You would peacefully  
envision—oh grimy  
child—that everyone you  
knew thus far  
at this small age  
was dead—what's  
*dead*—mourn your parents  
sweet warm parents  
taste the soil then  
pretend to live  
for hours on some

foggy Saturday morning  
subsist on twigs carrots  
chives rhubarb from  
the backyard garden            Braid  
a roof            You  
hadn't yet read the  
stranger's book—he'd  
been to war—full  
of dread—excitement  
discerning newly revealed terrifying  
conditions (or perhaps  
not *new* just *said*)—  
conditions of unrelenting  
thirst—neighbors turning crop  
shortages earthquakes storms  
During those decades in  
which you endured  
you guess you were  
a cautious person—  
full of regret            Impossible  
to understand            Impossible  
to understand—this fact  
unnatural—*unnatural* you  
read the stranger wrote  
but what is  
*natural*            He pictured all  
the ways in  
meditation one could end:  
explosives beheading drought

gunshot lost realistic utilizations  
of the imagination  
for how are we  
just now accepting  
our trajectory as terminating  
here—*breath halts*  
*here*—it stops in  
Chicago a Saturday  
morning sunny bright unusually  
calm so many  
friends the dog snoring  
at home                      No  
The end has already  
passed                      It's done  
Recall a morning when  
your only worry  
was time (stupid)—money  
(boring)—being called  
another woman's name (again)  
but what matters  
most what matters is  
not your name—  
your name a tool  
to test or  
tell us when you've  
left (not what  
hurt you)                      Oh silly  
civic fool                      Erase  
it the stranger wrote

we're all already  
doomed                      Accept it                      Dead  
despite the news  
of CO<sub>2</sub> turning to  
fuel fuel turning  
back despite the spiral's  
whorl you drew  
a long thickening tail  
claiming *pineapples! constellations!*  
*snails!*—despite Elle despite  
Les despite Dad  
already gone what matters  
now still matters—  
*it matters*—identify an  
image or phrase—  
shard of what could  
bear your last  
lasting thought—something durable:  
the city's sirens  
ice sheets rich crimson  
shade of the  
truck that took you  
Satchel's gaze                      Calm  
yourself                      Ask is it  
simpler to accept  
such fate when one  
is what one  
calls a woman                      What  
is a woman

if not skilled in  
sudden cessation                      Say  
it: the sun  
isn't getting any cooler  
water cleaner                      Assist  
each other need new  
gears visualize all  
eventual disasters like falling  
off a building  
down the stairs horrifying  
crash dementia pandemic  
fire flood food shortages  
cancer cancer lead...  
So far it's true  
you've only witnessed  
one flight                      You didn't  
fight but felt  
some I slide out  
the side of  
what grave scene and  
if it was  
replaced—that *I*—it  
had a different face

## ORDINARY STRATA (CLEVELAND)

Meadowbrook Road keeps the meadow's brook secret

A firetruck sale scribbled on the window in soap

Free museum

Solo tulip

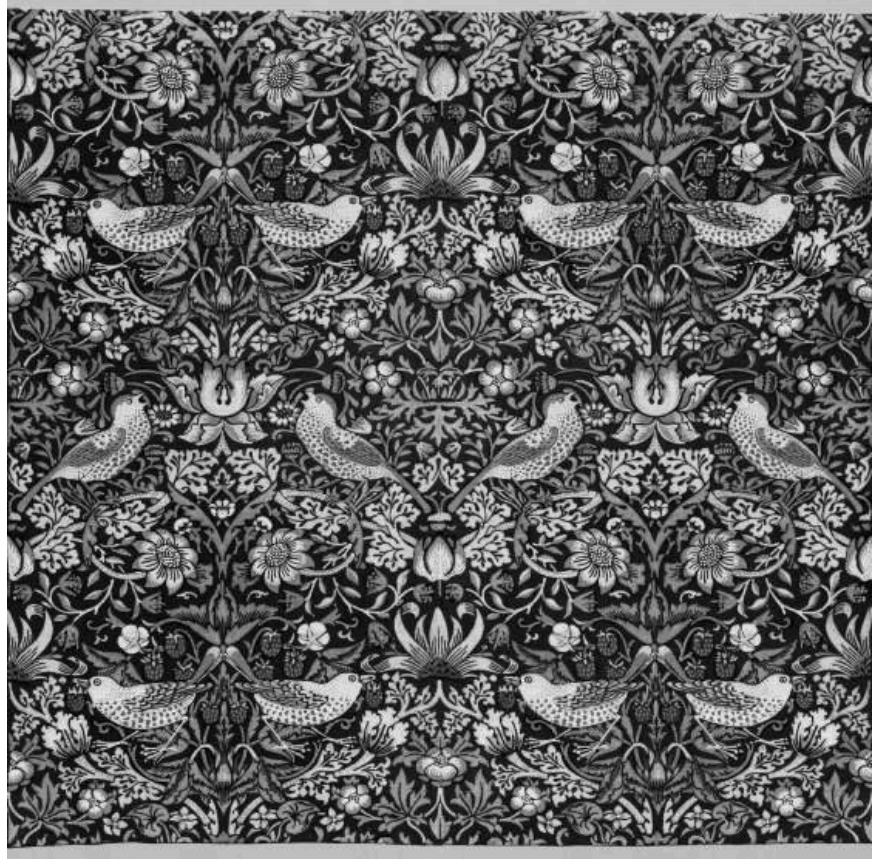
Trombone player not great you heard

Man remembering his childhood in Hough

Before the hospital buildings went up

## WINDOWS





.....winter.....'s day

Date 03-05-20

Mood: Happy Sad-Tired-Quiet-Busy-Talkative

Not him/her-self

Snack: ate did not-tryed \_\_\_\_\_

Lunch: Ate all-some-none-most

Needs: \_\_\_\_\_

Activities: ball ramp, bear push toy, activity boxes, animal sounds.

Nap: 1:00  
2:00

Toileting:

Time	BM	Wet	Toilet
9:00	✓		
12:30		✓	
3:30		✓	



## THE VANITAS FLY

After Jacques Linard's *A vanitas still life with a skull, an hourglass, a tulip in a glass  
vase, a shell and butterfly, all resting on a stone ledge*

In this version

by Jacques Linard—gouache on parchment year

undetermined—you find

a fly floating not in the Brandy

Old Fashioned (as

sometimes happens) but perched instead a fraction

of an inch

above the brow or where the painting's

skull's brow would

have been—if it still had skin—

the brow in

life no memento mori but a furrowed

field of worry—

forehead forewarning fear or focus forever performing

a kind of

counsel—as you lean in—peering closer

at the rose

tones glowing off the laptop's screen—propped

open in an

airport bar where you've lingered the last

hour browsing ancient

vanitas—temples wrinkled by attention—wrinkles evident

in this your

thirty-seventh year on this your first anniversary

a period in  
 which one might feel—from where? *inside*  
 or *out*?—abrupt  
 demand to decide what lives might alight  
 because of (or  
 not) some gut feeling                      A feeling feeling  
 like the feeling  
 that in literature leads certain miserable young  
 men to elevate  
 their once friend's dead head high to  
 the heavens and  
 beg of it answers to existential questions  
 while for similar  
 reasons a woman might... what?... *drown*?... (no—  
 that must be  
 wrong)                      Only clowns would activate an antidote  
 to abstraction by  
 engendering a particular alien with which to  
 portend—protect or  
 threaten (as if a baby's skull were  
 a crystal ball  
 used to foretell from the sonogram)                      One  
 should question their  
 most fundamental desires                      Would you call them  
 distraction?                      Would you  
 say the torpid storm-worn sound-found image of  
 new cells forming  
 is vanity or vanitas?                      Such crisis is  
 binding—it subsists

both on and inside of you                      But  
look: in this  
version by Jacques Linard—gouache on parchment—  
year undetermined—the  
yellow-tipped wilting tulip shell and frozen hourglass  
frame a bug  
finding repose on bone—the fly’s location  
occasionally known as  
the *third eye*—a sense of potential—  
source of clairvoyance—  
distinguished from but not entirely dissimilar to  
the so-called *mind’s*  
*eye*—the eye with which one conceives  
of scenes unscripted—  
verdicts unheard yet or (in the case  
of our sad  
prince) deeds already done—by the ghost  
of Dad—our  
past’s symbols acting as that which has  
already been forecast

(It’s true: we’ve seen the play                      But  
just because some  
signs are clear that doesn’t mean we  
can heed them)

You lean nearer—wondering: *How many eyes*  
*does a fly*

*have?*                      (Refresh the tab)                      *Five*                      Two compound—

“ommatidium”—immobile—composed—  
making panoramic mosaics of landscape—perceiving light  
(the future) four  
times faster than any human might                      Just  
try whisking such  
swift pests away—their presence present as  
a tickle or  
itch long after wings have alit—which  
is still seconds  
before one’s own inept hand lands—slapping  
skin in what’s  
become the insect’s ancient past—smack’s sting  
reiterating initial landing...  
It’s maddening!                      One could waste a whole  
day (or decade)  
swatting at their torment—torment persisting whether  
torment presents as  
groom apparition drone or Dad—torments habitually  
privileged more lines  
than the minor gal—abandoned to her  
rue rant ruin—  
to scale the willow or perhaps—*damn*  
*it*—deliver to  
the world yet another sad sack                      Best  
not to dwell  
on the likely paths                      Instead catch cool  
comfort in the  
fly—an annoyance seeing nothing complete in  
order to proceed

with ambition—one's future understood in shards  
no harder to  
hold than the entire design                      The vanitas  
fly sports five  
eyes—two compound—three more unassuming “ocelli”  
used to—so  
the search says—“pinpoint its partner” but  
why oh why  
are we always pairing up?                      Yorick's skull  
returned after many  
moons underground to the warm palms of  
his old friends—  
an enviable route you assume to resurface  
as muse (amusement)  
and mellow presence among one's treasured cohort  
solely to provoke  
another joke—for the ultimate concern on  
earth (so the  
skull sweetly sings two drinks in) is  
not *to be*  
or *not to be* (not even *who*  
*to make to*  
*be*) but how best to continue to  
collaborate...                      Oh familiar  
ghosts!                      We are beholden!                      Yes Dad's apparition  
terrified but think  
of all that gossip!                      Let's not look  
to the wilted  
princes or waterlogged women but to Yorick

for his grave  
 long-term pranks—jester’s soil-stained charm—the alarm  
 he inspired in  
 too-serious colleagues                      Oh delicate skeleton!                      What ridiculous  
 roles we’ve played!  
 Your plane home is boarding shortly                      Hear  
 a human’s once  
 singular voice repeating boarding zones via mechanized  
 tones and consider  
 that every head ever rendered left to  
 rot or dug  
 up once housed its most useful tool  
 in the safe  
 soft center of itself                      The tongue—muscle  
 tasked with stirring  
 speech—is still sharper than the sword  
 or pen—with  
 more precision than progeny—one’s prospects more  
 often revealed through  
 talk than by any actual exacting thought  
*Speak to it!*  
 urged the guards to Horatio                      Say what  
 it is that  
 you really want                      Make it so through  
 spell or oath—  
 tell your secrets to the nearest ghost  
 Graveside the gravedigger  
 claimed that Yorick once dumped a pitcher  
 of wine on

his friend's head (what fun! a baptism  
if there ever  
was one)—Yorick's life recalled by the  
ghost king's son  
with a tenderness surpassing even that expressed  
for the prince's  
own kin                    Are we charming only in  
our friend's heads?  
Is delusion what eventually gets us through?  
It's nine at  
night                    According to your ticket this will  
be a short  
flight                    You take a quick sip from  
your watery drink  
and tuck a tip into the bill  
book remembering that  
if one hears a fly go by—  
they're still alive—  
remembering that you can't take any of  
this with you  
But what is the source of the  
buzz?                    How much  
life is enough?                    You swat at a  
shadowy quiver in  
the periphery of your vision—an abrupt  
dim glimmer to  
the side of your eye—a single  
twinkling inkling at  
the edge of your attention...                    But there's

nothing there

No—

It's just the air

So you turn

around

You grab

your bag

You run along

You're in

such a rush

## STRAW

Never have you  
ever known a  
more elegant tool  
to suck (a  
gesture already too  
human)            Lips pursed  
nursing pulling light  
from some unseen  
end of the  
tunnel like a  
funnel with no  
waist            What waste—  
this reverse gravity  
strait            What minor  
changes it would  
take to save  
us            How unwilling  
we are to  
make them            Our  
basic instincts forecast  
imminent demise:            Optimism  
Haste            A shared  
propensity for self-deception

## ORDINARY STRATA (COTTAGE GROVE)

Bumps or cracks on the sycamore

The swiftest thinking about slow thought

Pushing an empty stroller home

Text making faux amends

Play the scene in your head again

Love lasts apart from action

Disregarding the way things might have been

## ORDINARY STRATA (COVENTRY)

Look over by the curbside wine can

Free tree in the tree line

Pupils contract when you give up

A “window to the soul” shuts

Can we make it home before the cumulonimbus do?

Steer around a smooshed squirrel

A dearth of mentors

## NOTES ON NOTES ON THOUGHT AND VISION

A late text  
from O showing a dead whale from  
the bow of  
his boat bloated floating wild while O  
arced the ship's  
helm (you have to imagine—yourself not  
a captain) *down*—  
re-routing the lab's vessel *around*—to catch  
a closer look  
at the popping stomach—striped lurid putrid  
balloon—*island* occupied  
with gas and fat—a baffling belly  
in ghastly distention  
(and *yes*—you looked it up—whales  
do have wombs)  
at which point he framed the corpse  
sans flash leaning  
over to snap a pic and fire  
it off—invisible  
signals—only to be received by you  
perched alone on  
a taupe sofa at home—a home  
acquired weeks before  
in a gesture—so your mother joked—

that evoked optimism  
by incurring debt                      *True true...*                      The sullen  
cynical drifter in  
you knows this loan tethers your soul  
to a pre-owned  
plot and from such soft fanned advantage  
on land—podcast's  
manic static masking the insistent disturbing chirping  
alerting of squirrels  
while you work—you tap tap tap  
with your thumb's  
tips a quick note to O in  
the slim space  
allotted under the blue box that gifted  
his missive—his  
text's message (unbottled)—bubble noting that O's  
assigned whale arrived  
(of course) on course unbidden—soft—deceased—  
in peace—causing  
no harm no strain no epic chase  
as demonstrated by  
the phone's photo's distant pixilated image—lined  
alien belly—with  
pleats like those in an umbrella's bloom—  
bruising pale greyish  
pink—enlarged with lard—the pitiable puss  
of a recently  
breathless mammal having no hole or open  
field in which

to steady itself and *let go* in—  
though we humans  
too are buried stomach up—one difference  
being our eyes  
face forward as if caskets have windows  
while the whale  
gets to point its sightless gaze downward—  
into darkness—every  
corpse aligned to its right night                      O  
wrote he wanted  
to tow the bloat straight out into  
the ocean in  
order to unburden the bulky body's burden  
of its burden  
but the law pronounces whales—even lifeless—  
untouchable—untouched the  
mammal's required to remain until its remains  
wash up on  
some shore where this poor creature's fate—  
like all our  
fates—will depend upon the state (with  
its strict systemic  
rules—rules that often locate themselves ahead  
of god—or  
perhaps not god but *bodies*)                      The state  
instead will send  
several men with the aid of cranes  
to raise said  
weight and (there is no more delicate

way to say

this) *trash it*—its matter triggering further

trouble—an outcome

entirely predictable when cleaving a corporeal performance

from its desired

course                      Bewildered—entranced—stupid you reply totally

in emoji: 🐙



Complicit or numbed

your focus these

past few months wrecked by persistent interruption...

*What*

*is*

*in*

*the*

*way*

*of*

*thought?*

*Is*

*it*

*image?*

This was the end of summer—cusp

of autumn—more

than a year since                  violent                  disruption                  resulting

in                  catastrophic civic

panic                  Insistent disquiet                  Eradication of precision—end

of the line

So you turn to HD again—her

jellyfish                  an emblem

of unending struggle to involve *the thought*

Lost to lost

nature—not caught—the over-mind HD wrote

will survive outside

of consciousness—or *above*—a trance state

pulse                      as locomotion

way of retrieving clearer feeling—the jellyfish

swimming compressed opaque—

a mind physical floating through impenetrable liquid

din of primordial

soft self                      moon sea                      space webbing                      Lens

with which to

love                      the trance state called over-mind                      Brittle

breach in surface

vision past shape or creature

We wonder

is it summer

forever now?

Is it the dreaded end

yet?

And if

it is the end then can we

claim we clung

to it?

The wind!

Lightening bolts flash

by

Goodbye tides!

Goodbye reefs!

Ready are you ready for

the harshest parts?

Hunger burns preventable illness opioids poverty libel—

the flu?

Preparation

paralyzed by waiting

the whale a warning

this average evening

Do you want to be of service?

*Focus*

The belly

gently suspended above the sea

skin

mind

your mind inside

a jellyfish able to discern storm dust—

psychic inklings—skull

inking

dripping muddy pond

bad eyes—forecast

on—this instinct

to describe what trouble

hasn't transpired yet...

Rewind rewind

(unconformity

in time)

Concentrate on where you are

and what you

are allowed to help

Concentrate on who

taught you to

want to—who provides aid

without compensation—

without expressed or

aggressive gain

who spins the gyre

Concentrate

on the current

the unspooling present thought...

You're sitting on

a taupe sofa

in a grey house

Satchel asleep

O

on a boat—

the whale drifting away from its plotted

fate

We are

not safe

*(We are not safe)*

But

there is grace

*(There is grace)*

Our mothers are everywhere

## ORDINARY STRATA (APPLEDORE ISLAND)

Golden lichen blown to the top of the radar tower

A rock talk on plastics

Gull feeding a baby to its babies

No longer antithetical no longer hypothetical

Sewing tarps on the pool table

Pulling up invertebrates with silt

Entering the shed by a door in another door

## WILDERNESS

The first ship  
to carry you away

wasn't named the  
*Martha J*—which was

in fact the  
ivory boat that O

would subsequently coax—  
at twilight—months later—

in silence—across  
the bay—to show

you seals dissolving  
slowly over eroded rocks

(the engine off)  
as they transitioned from

one way of  
being—*breathing*—to another

Underwater the seals  
unseen—immediate—attentive—present

as a mother  
and then again some

days later—through  
the harsh hazardous haze

of a summer  
storm—you sailed out

to the Ajax  
Café—that childhood haunt—

for hats and  
salmon in Port Hadlock—

then back among  
the blackening waves to

O's home dock  
in Port Townsend                    *How*

*strange* you might  
have thought—to knot

one's lot to  
a stranger's—but *maybe*

*not*—your stranger  
stranger still since then—

just now bearing  
more strata—like how

the finest craft  
to convey you away

was a rusty  
red 1990's Bronco and

the sweet sliding  
soul who one May

day decades ago  
gave life to O

(years later saving  
it when he wanted

out) was the  
very woman the wooden

tender *Martha J*  
was consequently named for

## WINDOWS











## ORDINARY STRATA (CLEVELAND)

How to signal distress

An 18th floor elevator opens to a waterfall

A village exists to defend where you panic

Cops under federal investigation

Two “fresh and meaty” King Babies

The toast invented as a test for poison

Our responsibility clean water

## LAKEVIEW CEMETERY

Down Mayfield Road  
a bit before Little

Italy—beginning at  
the abandoned grade school—

ghost swings uncanny  
arboreal murmurs—saddest dog

the tethered dog—  
laundry line t-shirts drying

hurt squirrel shuffling  
shattered legs dragging its

back half broken  
across a split sidewalk—

dragging the heft  
of its own infirm

frame                    See versions  
of this city as

it once was  
over the version that

it is: abandoned  
Walmart illuminated abandoned celestial

observatory abandoned clandestine  
desolate country club abandoned

theater abandoned barbershop  
deer coyote loose kids

a fox                  Rainforest  
Car Wash              Shoe and

Leather Repair                  Wicked  
Taco storefront closed and

then the cemetery  
Who was it that

was once here—  
what was it that

they then revered?  
Another mile through iron

gates spring green  
on Garfield's tomb—second

assassinated—interned forever

next to—*well*—his

wife                      Mayors                      Surgeons

Standard Oil barons                      Titans

of so-called industry—

silent like there was

no omen—silent

like there is no

past                      (Like memory

isn't layered—like bodies

can't corrupt)                      You

heard a boy one

day darted across

a park—darted you

heard into or

through the park—his

park—not far—

his park—a boy

waving with a

boy's joy—what most

would say was

a boy's toy—playing

in a park

(his park)—near a

swing (his swings)

But who will carry

his name now?

Others still stop up

the plot: CUSHING

NESS STOKES MORGAN SHERWIN

WINTON and BRUSH

See the sign in

the gravekeeper's window

reads: FREE CLEAN FILL

DIRT

See ROCKEFELLER's

buried here

Where's TAMIR?

## ORDINARY STRATA (CLEVELAND)

*Syphilis is Serious* billboard

*Abortion is Fake Feminism* billboard

Hot Sauce Williams is closing

Wicked Taco is closing

Cave de Vin is closing

Tav Co is closed

Now it's open again in Brennan's

## A HISTORY OF THE COLOR ORANGE

*For Hilary Plum*

Maybe orange was  
born when a few twigs of tinder  
were rubbed together  
(at first with pleasure—a tender touch—  
then later harder)  
as the friction changed a soft blue  
spark into white  
heat—springing bright—a *flame* both warm  
warning wave and  
the name of the blaze’s most observable  
part                    You predict  
such primitive process probably wasn’t *human improvement*  
but something clarified—  
made conceivable by the sight of lightening  
knifing land—man  
inspired to ignite by the night’s ragged  
light—the smoky  
odor of meat steaming after a summer  
storm or vision  
of a paradise burning                    Orange was initially  
referred to as  
“yellow-red” then “naranga” in Sanskrit (though “saffron”  
came first) in  
the early sixteenth century                    It’s said that

in ancient Egypt  
the mineral orpiment—an orange arsenic—was  
ground into pigment  
and used to embellish the exteriors of  
royal tombs                      Orpiment  
was included (along with statues pendants masks  
and perfumes) in  
a small paint set among the possessions  
that King Tut  
had stuck next to his mummified remains  
for the long  
and boring slog that is the voyage  
to the afterlife  
The powder stuck around—and orpiment could  
still be found—  
on the chiseled tips of arrows as  
well as in  
pest control                      It seems even the cheeriest  
natural ingredients contain  
toxins—our dead less often processed as  
pure compost than  
imprisoned in decorative poison                      Orange has always  
been a warning:  
think of life jackets hunter's vests highway  
cones and even  
the so-called safety tip of a toy  
gun—a lump  
of neon plastic supposed to distinguish what's  
“fun” from the

real thing but (*fuck*) the real thing's  
tragic deal is  
that it can't be undone                      Some love  
orange for its  
proximity to gold                      Some adore it for  
the color's nearness  
to heat: peach campfire sun and poppy  
clementine carrot parrot  
and lion                      We even conceive of hell  
in this hue  
Dante did too                      Hypocrites were destined to  
trudge grudgingly through  
the wicked ditches of the eighth circle  
of the underworld  
under the eternal burden of orange cloaks  
hooded and heavy  
with lead lining—ordinary on the outside  
but punishing within—  
which makes you think of the region  
where you live  
Legend has it that the “Rust Belt”  
was named thus  
by Walter Mondale who in the early  
'80s disapproved of  
Reagan's breezy refusal to accept the ruin  
that upset workers  
residing in central states—facing downsizing after  
their industry decayed—  
the “rust” referring to the slow corrosion

of steel—corruption  
of metal when left wet and neglected—  
a picture of  
perversion when a population's essentials are ignored  
too long—when  
the labor that's kept some people going's  
gone                Rusty as  
the russet flush of flowerless flower boxes—  
sans beds—built  
by O to bookend the draining grey  
shades of your  
porch—your yard—your entire town—always  
down—perpetually winter  
bound                You call the six-foot brick hollows  
bordering your front  
door “welcome coffins”—a joke working only  
on folks who  
don't plan to be buried here                Orange  
is the sign  
of sudden detour—but also the sunny  
silent pleasing tone  
of robes worn by Buddhist monks—bright  
like fresh egg  
yolks—or the sweater of your friend  
who dons amber  
to many a get-together—amusing smart and  
cool (she is)—  
the color a contrast to the charm  
of her given

name                    Plum's ideal sartorial palette reminds you  
of *Flaming June*—  
or better yet Frida Khalo's *Roots*—in  
which the artist  
reclines on her side in desert dirt—  
one elbow propped  
defiantly on a pillow—lime-colored ivy vines  
spiraling wild through  
a transparent rectangular break in her chest—  
a surrealist's window—  
cut open from a long orange dress  
creating a shape  
with which to let living material sprout  
forth and nourish  
the thirsty earth—her hidden heart giving  
birth (or blood?)  
to the sort of enduring beauty that  
can't possibly hurt  
anyone                    There's wisdom there                    Khalo's face is  
calm but *come*  
*on*—who would prefer a ginger gown  
to royal blue?  
(Not you)                    Frank O'Hara wrote "There should  
be / so much  
more—not of orange—of / words—of  
how terrible orange  
is / and life"                    He's right                    For most  
of your life  
you've observed bronze and tawny leaves precede

the darkest season—  
a vivid spectral banner of surrender before  
the impending white  
cloak of cold—winter a landscape zero  
(now disappearing)—but  
this new year you walk instead along  
a warm windy  
shore in Florida—abiding with each sandy  
step a heft  
in your torso's window                      You've been told  
the algae floating  
off the coast is termed "red tide"  
(though it looks  
more like a coral pink)—blooming pollutant—  
chemicals draining into  
the gulf lasting mostly only a few  
weeks each season  
until this year when the airborne contagion  
continued for many  
months causing a cold's constant cough or  
constriction in some  
breathers' lungs—your lungs already constricted by  
no sickness but  
a boy (forming) crowding organs—hoarding all  
the internal real  
estate                      (It's strange)                      Steel waves roar to  
shore over half-moon  
gaps made by your heavy heels digging  
deep into weak

sand                      What effort it requires to move  
forward with care  
What effort it requires to bear images  
of Paradise burning  
See the horses fleeing flaming fields in  
search of a  
river or less smoky spot to wait  
like the shade  
of a gas station                      In one picture  
a donkey's secured  
to a pole in the road—deer  
carcasses punctuate parking  
lots                      You've read crabs fear wound-colored water  
and sea turtles  
are washing up on the coast                      You  
understand that this  
is not a game                      Having a child  
will mean death  
in your name                      You'll be forever fated  
to wear the  
cloak of shame for initiating a poor  
unwitting soul to  
this earth's abysmal changes in an age  
that likely contains  
its own end                      But unlike its friend  
red orange doesn't  
mean *stop* but *proceed with caution* and—  
to be honest—  
though you claim you can't imagine hell—

you don't have  
to            There's proof: video of a twelve-year-old  
boy being shot  
in the park (it took just two  
seconds—following zero  
questions) by a so-called authorized adult            Watch  
as the horizon's  
line blooms honey lavender turquoise gold salmon  
and amber            Will  
this little kicking kid someday want a  
gun?            What will  
you do to prevent him from getting  
one?            There's always  
a decisive streak of neon green after  
the sun's plunge

## ORDINARY STRATA (LAKE ERIE)

In every living thing is stuff that now is lead

Plastics opioids pesticides estrogen

News of a stabbing in the parking lot

Unconformity or trauma in the same line

Lives are made of a few things (retold)

Dream of the taco boat

52% of men think birth control doesn't benefit them

## ORDINARY STRATA (LAMBERTON ROAD)

Mushroom prints on the internet

Ad for Congress in the party lawn

Waking up early like you said you would

Burnt sweet potato smell

New home brew discussing its man again

Guilt for ignoring the summons stews

Winter insisting *woof woof come too*

## ORDINARY STRATA (LAKE SUPERIOR)

Glaciers pressed the sandstone cliffs

They made all this

How the grand lake mouths the land

The lake spells no thing

A child will be earth before their diapers are

“What did that man close the window about?”

A thousand plastic cars adrift

## WINDOWS









## REPORT CARDS

*late January 2020-early March 2020*

ball ramp / rain

stick / bead

track / mood: happy /

snack /

spin

top / jack-in-the-box / musical

toys / open

and close drawers /

nap /

activities: keeping

hands to self / “stop

throwing” / mood: happy / apple / ate

lunch (some) / three

times wet /

touched (tenderly)

the cheeks of others

sleeping / woke

everyone else

up / mood: happy / *eeck*

*eeck ack! / ah bah*

*bah bah! /*

big grin / double

chin / activities: animal

sounds / held

spoon / ate

most but didn't like

the green

stuff / mood:

happy / finger

exercises / then following

simple commands

## ORDINARY STRATA (CHICAGO)

Unfolds the week of weak storms

Tuesdays at ten an alarm sounds in the Midwest

Eager to suspend the end

The milk doesn't set

*It's just water*

Or Malört

A potential fern on the ridge of a shoulder

## IT IS WITH A PATTERN AS WITH A FORTRESS

The waxy strip  
peeled back discloses a patterned sticker meant  
for pressing gently  
to the wall's dull skin while smoothing  
out each irksome  
wrinkle by hand (a thumb for precision  
along flawed edges—  
palms for flattening vast fields of budding  
bubbles) the goal  
being to line the sliced side of  
a lavender or  
grass-green leaf's edge with the brink of  
the next such  
that one wall of the underused upstairs  
bedroom blooms into  
a tranquil space—aquatic maybe—underwater woodland  
scene or site  
of several bright watery gems—an enchanted  
backdrop that could  
only balance (it seems) the other objects  
present: a *Moby-Dick*  
board book whale mobile and pink Himalayan  
salt lamp supposed  
to—so claims O—expel negative ions

into the air—

a kind of lung care you'd never  
have thought of...

This fashionable modern online-orderable boutique wallpaper arrives  
in sticky ribbons

that can be removed with minimal effort

when one's (inevitably

someday) sick of the pattern their old

self picked unlike

the enduring glued designs still observable in

many a grandmother's

home or most of those that line

this Cleveland Heights

road replete with hundred-year-old "charms" as evidence

of another generation's

domestic "character"

The pattern before you is

purple lime blue

periwinkle and navy creating a vertiginous dizzying

effect (one might

claim *psychedelic*) when accumulated en masse causing

you to recall

all at once the sweet small child

who materialized unbidden

in your dream last night and wonder

if this kid—

(whose name was "Winter" like the current

season)—would enjoy

a similar image to contemplate each evening

before plummeting into

his own private slumber.. (But wait—dream  
children aren't real—  
*right?*—unless they're a vision?) One should  
remain open to  
strange repetitions Strange repetitions like when last  
week you found  
yourself mesmerized not by the nursery's wall  
but a small  
room of William Morris florals tucked into  
the center of  
Cleveland's steamy (in a blizzard) free art  
museum—Morris's show  
showing that a single vine carefully rendered  
can occur again  
and again (and again) (and again) in  
what one imagines  
must be a text—or textile's—new  
context but really  
*it isn't* It's just the same shape  
re-seen and you  
are by now (which is actually *then*)  
a little different—  
but by *now's* now you know the  
image clearer or  
at least with clarifying bewilderment—eyes scanning  
inked pattern in  
search of variance—minor mark or error—  
tear—tremor—any  
sign that the artist's hand can't draw

flawlessly the exact  
petal twice (thrice) (forever)                      It turns out  
of course he  
didn't                      Morris printed—made template preventing haphazard  
traces of impatience  
in the wooden block's precise pressure on  
layers of etched  
leaves—the leaves relying on accurate color  
matches stamped in  
the correct sections—connecting each stem's bend  
to the next  
in a series—the series prioritizing no  
individual form but  
instead the strength of a group's union  
like—for example—  
a Bruegel might—every citizen as irrefutably  
relevant to a  
bucolic tableau's panorama as their neighbor is  
Some of Morris's  
prints became wallpaper                      Others are represented in  
the deliberately mismatched  
outfits of hipsters or on the adorable  
(boring) front of  
a newborn's romper because in infant fashion  
all patterns are  
perfect—perfect as a baby learning one  
sound (*da da*  
*da da da*) before the whole word  
(world) comes stumbling

out                    At your shower you received wraps  
blankets bags and  
onesies with a single printed image (skull  
boat star or  
fern) reproduced over and over again (*ugh—*  
why are breeders  
so *derivative?*) forecasting the inevitable truth that  
soon your days  
too will ensue such that the same  
thing happens at  
the exact same time—like a predictable  
rhyme: pleasing sans  
any surprise—the goal being to generate  
a collaborative sequence  
of habits that feel organic—a way  
of behaving consistently  
that’s also thrilling?—like one who plates  
painted flowers in  
the same way—day after day—or  
measures lines in  
units of threes and sevens to reflect  
the age at  
which they first became the author of  
another (a mother)  
as if math could secure a sounder  
path—as if  
a poem broken open could sufficiently reveal  
the circumstances of  
the rowdy doubting mind that wrote it

like the rings  
of an ancient pine or the stamped  
itty bitty lines  
of a new fingerprint's signature                      The image  
of vines and birds—strawberries and thorns—  
sketched from sight  
on site—like Morris's—are unlike how  
you came to  
know of honeysuckle marigold peacock or ivy  
which was primarily  
through the corporate mass production of pastoral  
patterns in fashion  
as now Winter will learn of his  
namesake via hearsay  
and research—stories of six-foot snow drifts—  
illustrations of ice  
floes on plastic bottles—capitalist tragedies—rumors  
of the moods  
of the coolest polar vortexes via literature  
and experimental film  
(or his parents' whims)—Winter (not yet  
in existence)—will  
soon snooze to the low drone of  
a white noise  
machine's subtle drone as opposed to the  
messy orchestral cacophony  
of backyard crickets—sonic density growing scarce—  
sound scales muting—  
the strata's data demonstrating abnormality's prominence over

previously reliable historical

pattern... But don't wreck this room (yet)

with prediction Just

let's stare without purpose at the wall

for a minute

Let's stare without purpose at the wall

for a minute

Let's stare without purpose at the wall

for a minute

Let's stare without purpose at the wall

for a minute

## ORDINARY STRATA (CLEVELAND)

Rotting meat silver lemon candlestick wax

Pleasure just out of reach

Sign up at the broken link

The first frame should set in motion a theme

Crafted to exist out of context

The vitriol of our age

Garbage obscene

## ORDINARY STRATA (LAMBERTON ROAD)

Chimney too old and corroded to be usable

They told her “don’t let it go to your head”

Egg sandwich with tomatoes and cheddar

Looking through an archway at the angle of a window

Satchel snoring on the kitchen rug

What is it possible to pause for

Inquiry of interruption



## PHOTO CREDITS

### Windows I

Runyan, Robert. "Aerial photo of Taylor & Mayfield roads (Cleveland Heights, Ohio)." 1949. Public Domain. From the collection of Bruce Young. [clevelandmemory.org](http://clevelandmemory.org). <https://clevelandmemory.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/clevehts/id/1025/rec/2>

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### Windows III

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