

12-2006

The Strange

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Recommended Citation

Hartman, Charles O. "The Strange." *Poetry* 189.3 (2006): 193-194. Web.

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CHARLES O. HARTMAN

The Strange

fungus raised by the night's rain
dreams in the day's lawn. Mist lifts.
Up from the deck's timbers blooms
the other, astral body
of the skunk who houses there,

a sweet familiar story.
After a scratch song on sex
flung down from the wild cherry,
sampling gulls jays chipmunks and
the stuck windows of the world,

the catbird flits to the rail
and lights by the resting hand.
Who'd give this up by moving?
Sun teases out tufts of cloud
to wind on the sky spindle.

Things change by rungs and you bring
a child to an altered world.
Then woman. Then gone. I'm so
big beside the trusting bird —
slope patiently trodden up

by a populace of gifts.
Witness the blue, decrepit,
greasy cat in the guest room,
marking time. Witness catnip
gone to such prodigal seed

in the fallen flowerbox.
She would have said, the catnip,
your catnip, with a mocking
eye. It isn't that I don't
remember, only that things

grow well beyond me. Alone,
the dead oak whitens daily.
Beetles in the winter cord
multiply like dragonflies
over grass, like wishes. Look,

bird — abroad in the daylight,
velvet scurry in a green
thicket, a mole, darker than
your gray shoulders and as soft.
What would we save ourselves for?

remembering everything.
Apparently, out of the
blue, in catbird morning, spores
of fecund astonishment
thread cubic miles of humus.

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