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For Philip Larkin (orchids)

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For Philip Larkin (orchids)

The vent above, slow as emphysema,
draws long gasps out. I think it wants
to die. At my right nostril, a hansa
yellow and magenta accident of orchids
interrupts my Larkin. They bitch and kibbitz
like a Ladies' Book Club, or some putrid Mums'
Night Out, meant to yammer through my
'Ambulance.' The duct in the ceiling
sighs. All false.

The nose-job and the simpering
cock-tease stumble across honesty, at least –
but these lie, limpid, reach for a rough
hand, like prostitutes in leopard skin. Each
puts on timelessness, pretends never to wither
or fade, denies her kinship to the corpse-flower
Amorphophallus Titanum (i.e., big dick
shape). All smile and nip their fingernails and pick
their perfect teeth. With lip-tender edges, their
petals beg, wickedly.

The orchids work
on me; I too am weak in the knees
now; now unwilling to die.

| *David Staniunas*