

STRATIGRAPHY

by Mia S. Willis

for the THEM!HOOD.

“Stratigraphy – The study of the layers (strata) of sediments, soils, and material culture at an archaeological site[.]” — The Archaeological Institute of America

V. MODERN LAYER

and each time the boi dies pour one out for ‘em.
the black word is left to the air again cry whole hailstorms.
new kindling in every mouth / love harder than thunder.
new dances for all the dust. all the living done together.

IV. 2013 – 2017

their fingertips cartographers of the land play the dozens with the devil.
meet red clay in the jaw / flame death mans be for everybody.
slate lining the ribcage / funny box run right over.
anoint altars with honest touch.

III. 2006 – 2012

throat a cavern of infinity water to a whale.
hair of pitch-pine smoke nappy as a briar patch.
and hands content with emptiness an appetite for every breath
the black word became the boi ayyyyyyye.

II. 1995 – 2005

and so this black word spoke itself anew. aw shit.
declared itself a body / a beating fire / go off, nigga.
a burning heart / yo, that’s lit.
a brown skin etiology.

I. 1994

in the beginning there was the word. oh word?
and that word was black. ayyyyyyye.
but this primordial black lacked a glyph;
a phoneme with no flesh equivalent./ damn, that’s cold.