

Spiritualizing the Organic

Anne Elizabeth Berbert

The garden heaves with what does not belong—
plastics, agent orange, rubber cement, land mines
that won't biodegrade, disintegrating corpse
bones, sanded into earth by worms
whose progeny will someday dismember us, too.
We chant things that grow, generate
heat, reproduce, breathe, eat, drink.
We have tasted the sun freckling our skin,
watched cows' flesh darken in the iron pan,
felt the poppy seed reconfigure the brain.
We weep, embarrassed, changed
by slaves' sweat, Jews' ashes, embryos' blood,
the inhumanity of humans,
the irony that dead flesh sings the spirit's psalm.

We question: Are we circumscribed
by ethereal sky? Or are we mud?
If we ask the rose, the raw ornament says:
"I grace your tables, scent your clothes,
spawn love in romantics,
then decorate your caskets and graves."