

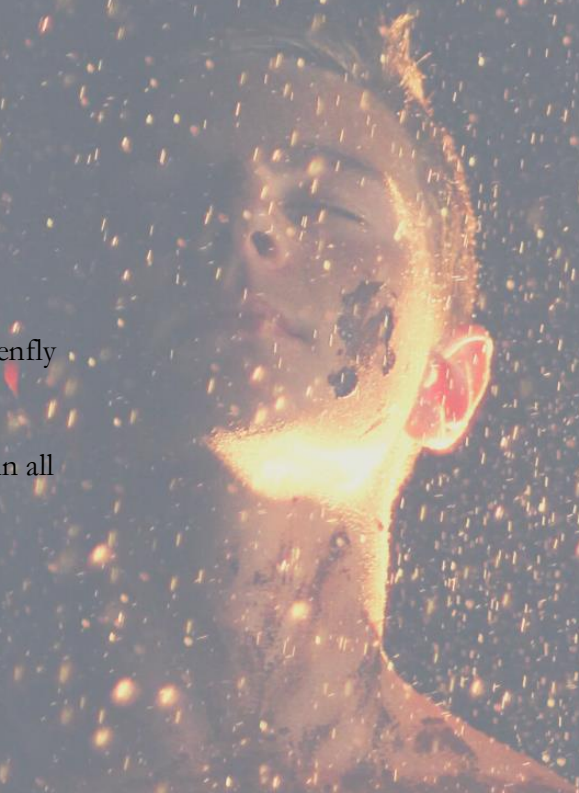
DUST

by Annie Bowles

Tensions drawn, drapes of sinew
Raked, lingering under haunches,
Aching in every crevice
Heavy with the burden
Gallons of years,
Strung across heaving torsos,
Burning under lamplight.

Ear to bone we hear
The grinding of chalk and ivory
Polished, perfect – whittled to dust,
White powders raw fingers,
The etchings of creation traced in their whorls,
Licked clean and forgotten.

If I held that golden apple to the sun,
My vision of orchards would slacken
And melt into the riveted earth
Of nightmare soil,
Dank and fertile,
To reach those tender shoots
Out of orifices, lining the horizon
Seen, dazzling,
By a litany of eyes focused
On every pockmark and trace of greenfly
That scars their tender sage -
Fear of shrivelling lurks against within all
Gatekeepers of the blossom, selfish
In our own reckoning.



Out of dust we breathe,
Organs heavy with forgotten pollen
Of sick green summers,
Coating alveoli with furry clag,
Dust motes and haze of the lung –
To sun bleached bones of the long dead,
Indifferent to the sand that swamps
Our parched lungs.

