



6-15-2007

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### Recommended Citation

Hazen-Hammond, Susan (2007) "Still Life with Ant," *Westview*: Vol. 26 : Iss. 1 , Article 27.  
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol26/iss1/27>

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# Still Life with Ant

by Susan Hazen-Hammond

The ant on the table walks across the paper  
I wrote the fifth doctor's opinion on.  
It weaves through the petals of the rose,  
climbs the crabapple, circles peach and pine cone.

The rose has no scent, the peach no fuzz.  
They are beasts in angel costume,  
roaring through my years  
with me on a leash behind them.

Could crabapples be chokecherries in drag?  
Did the wind twist these cones off the pine  
my great grandmother planted in 1904  
and fling them 30 states, 100 years, to me?

Once upon a time,  
people lived happily ever after.  
Once upon a time, I thought I would live  
happily, if not ever after.

If I had known how, I would have dreamed  
of fresh roses in a vase each morning,  
and planting my own pine.  
I would have dreamed of more  
than straining crabapple jelly  
and stirring chokecherry jam,  
but my world was as small as the paper  
that gives edges to this still life.

Why did I work as blindly as the ant  
that is struggling to tear my still life apart?  
When did roses lose their fragrance?  
When did peaches drop their fuzz?

Still life, life still.  
How long still do I have  
with this life?



I have grown as unselfed  
as the peach and the rose.  
There is pitch on my hands.  
There is pitch on my heart.

The ant falls off the edge of its world  
and finds death in the sole of a giant.



*Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall*

