

## SHADOW OF THE LOCUSTS

by Brian Bell

In the garden I grew from childhood,  
I tilled the soil; watered the earth.  
Pinched suckers from the armpits of each tomato shoot.  
Braced their furry trunks with stakes and torn rags,

Ordered the rows of beans, peppers, cabbages and broccoli.  
For many innocent years they grew thick, heavy, complacent,  
Until the locusts swarmed last spring,  
Feasting, devouring the delicate vegetation,

A storm cloud of vibrating legs and wings,  
Grinding leaves, fruit and stems into pulp.  
This year's garden grows in their shadow,  
Shaken, timid, thirsty, hassled by weeds.

I spend less time tending the plants,  
Supporting the stalks,  
Planning the arrangement.  
Instead I scan the horizon,  
And lament my mistakes.