

2009 IATE Poetry and Prose Contest

Poem of Special Merit

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What the Elephant Perhaps Feels

If a rainstorm
rumbling miles away
can send him to the next grassland,
then stillness is perhaps
the feeling of gnats flitting their wings
and the veins of leaves exhaling;
it may be a silver birch panting,
heavily, towards the surging sea
and the abrasive thumping of
shells shattering, when it happens.
We could ask the elephant
if pressure suffuses his ears
with the air of hubris, if hair
really grows. full length
without a perpetual tug, and if war
erupts across deserts without
a tremor of evidence.
If in spring, there isn't a tickle
too subtle for us to feel when the flowers
unfold their soft petals,
then what is it like in the
hyper realm beyond
our sense of touch?

For us, there was no earthquake;
the cracks in the ground suddenly appeared;
the landscape shattered, the buildings fallen,
and we sensed nothing as the earth crumbled.