

ELISA BIAGINI

ITALY (1970 –)

LANGUAGE: ITALIAN

POETIC FORM: FREE VERSE

SE L'ASSE CEDE (EXCERPT)

Se l'asse cede, se la
voce affonda
 c'è qui
nell'aria, la
parola-ramo
che ci tiene.



Elisa Biagini is a poet, artist, and translator. She writes in English and Italian. Born in the city of Florence, she studied and taught writing in the United States for several years. Her poems often talk about ordinary objects in unusual ways. She has described writing as a way of dealing with the things that frighten her. She explains that poetry “means forcing yourself to rediscover (and to cause to rediscover) reality, to pause for a longer time in front of things, to hear their inner noise.”*

* “Elisa Biagini,” Poetry International Rotterdam, 1 June 2006.
<http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poet/item/6866/24/Elisa-Biagini>

TRANSLATOR'S GLOSSARY		
WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
affonda (v.)	from the verb <i>affondare</i> , meaning to make a downward movement	descends, falls, drops, sinks
c'è (v.)	from the verb <i>essere</i> —to be	there is, there exists
cede (v.)	from the verb <i>cedere</i> —to lose force	collapses, falls, breaks, gives way
che (pron.)	refers to something previously mentioned	that, which
ci tiene (pron. + v.)	from the verb <i>tenere</i> —to hold or bear the weight of	holds us, keeps us, supports us
l'asse (n.)	a long, flat piece of wood	the plank, the board, the beam
la (art.)	denoting an individual object	the
nell'aria (phrase)	among the invisible gaseous substance surrounding the earth	in the atmosphere, in the air, in the sky
parola (n.)	a unit of language	word, term, phrase, speech
qui (adv.)	used to express the location or position of the speaker	here, in this place, at this point
ramo (n.)	a piece of a tree or plant	branch, twig, stem
se (conj.)	used to express a future possibility or condition	if, in the event that
voce (n.)	the sound of speaking	voice, talking

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

PHRASE BY PHRASE

SE L'ASSE CEDE _____

Se l'asse cede, se la _____

voce affonda _____

c'è qui _____

nell'aria, la _____

parola-ramo _____

che ci tiene. _____

DEFENDING YOUR TRANSLATION—FINDING THE MEANING

Group Member Names:

Date: _____

Pick a scribe for the group, and work together to answer the questions.

What are the best parts of this translation, and why do you think they are good?

What elements of the original poem did you lose in the translation? What did you manage to keep?

Did you achieve something new with your translation, and if so, does it make sense in the poem or not?
