

Susan Bassnett

On not noticing an earthquake

I was seven the first time. Looking at pictures.
An outing with my mother.
The gallery cool on a sticky afternoon.
A sound like trams crashing,
the swing of the world under my feet
unnoticed. Only one picture swaying,
Salome tilting John the Baptist's head,
rocking the platter in her arms.
How, when I remember that moment in my body
could I miss the earthquake today?
Perhaps because I never spoke of that first time,
clutching it to me like a lover's head,
afraid to tell my mother.

