



8-15-2018

Dürer's Rhinoceros

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Abstract

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Recommended Citation

Keith, Thomas K. (2018) "Dürer's Rhinoceros," *Westview*: Vol. 34 : Iss. 1 , Article 23.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol34/iss1/23>

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Dürer's Rhinoceros

by Thomas R. Keith

It wears a suit of armor
As the Earth wears its crust of plates:
Gravity-moored, it shifts only
Slowly, grudgingly, but its shrugs
Can swallow whole towns, whole cities.
The pockmarks on its great plates
Trouble it no more than the Moon
Is bothered by her black crater-dents.
Behind its neck valley piles up
Upon valley; from its snout, a mountain
Twisting crab-claw-fashion to heaven;
Tree-roots have grown in its chin,
So long unmoved. It could no more
Charge in fury than a Buddha-statue
Could leap up from its lotus-pose:
It has years still to go before
The thought that percolates in its brain-bulk
Bears fruit enough for motion.
Only its eye betrays the spark,
The meat-life in the stone-and-bone
Cuirass, the dumbly stolid mind
That offers no response to time's
Vain provocation: ten thousand waves
Of entropy will strike its shell and roll
Back to the sea before it deigns to blink.

