RECENT POEMS: RON SINGER

"The Elephant's Lithe Proboscis"

A critic borrowed this phrase, Miltonic, to lampoon the poet's lumbering wit. Just a little mot the critic tossed into his discourse, "a palpable hit." Luckily for said critic, the dead poet cannot riposte. Nor can Smectymnuus pen one of his brisk animadversions against this wit. And Google can't expose 'm. *

To those readers who were led to expect my poem to be something pachydermic, I owe apologies. Not to deflect the righteous, lawful animadversions of select lectors, who justly expect a title to trumpet a poet's intentions....

* The original phrase is from Paradise Lost, Book IV, 345-47:
  "...th' unwieldy elephant,
  To make them mirth, us'd all his might, and wreath'd
  His lithe proboscis ..."

Pace the absence of a footnote or Google entry, Edward Le Comte uses the phrase in his Introduction to Paradise Lost and Other Poems (New American Library, Mentor, 1961 & 1981, p. ix). Le Comte is mocking the argument of Milton (nicknamed "The Lady of Christ's"), addressed to his scoffing fellow collegians, that levity is not incompatible with moral philosophy (Prolusiones Oratoiae, #6, 1628).