

2012

The Possible Is Monstrous, Selected Poems, by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Translated by Daniele Pantano [Book Review]

Frederick Lubich

Old Dominion University, flubich@odu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/worldlanguages_pubs



Part of the [Modern Literature Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Lubich, Frederick, "The Possible Is Monstrous, Selected Poems, by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Translated by Daniele Pantano [Book Review]" (2012). *World Languages and Cultures Faculty Publications*. 28.
https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/worldlanguages_pubs/28

Original Publication Citation

Lubich, F. A. (2012). The Possible Is Monstrous, Selected Poems, by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, translated by Daniele Pantano [book review]. *International Poetry Review*, 38(2), 78-79.

[...] meaning with a flourish but no finish" (5). And the same might be said of Noon's translations, which are so affectionate and dexterous that the reader not only forgives but delights in the most garish of his renditions. "I stand in front of this plant/ and into the whirr of the computer," Rink concludes in one poem,

and think through the gentle swaying outside, the leaves,
the leaves, moved in formation, among their purple peers,
and this one ugly plant here as a figure of redemption, such
that we are all,
all resurrected into an obsolete age in which we neither sow
nor harvest but only abide, in the opposite of seduction.

And while the reader might quibble with some of his decisions, Noon's waging of bets on the elastic possibilities of poetic language seems true to the spirit of Rinck's project. Her poems enact the idealistic promise of language's resurrection, the calling of attention to those "ugly plant[s]" that transport us to a suspended and precarious form of presence.

Andrea Scott
Princeton University

Friedrich Dürrenmatt. *The Possible is Monstrous, Selected Poems*, translated by Daniele Pantano. New York: Black Lawrence Press, 2010. Pp. 214. Paper \$17.

The present volume is a translation of Dürrenmatt's poetry collection *Das Mögliche ist ungeheuer*, which first appeared in German in 1986. Daniel Pantano introduces Dürrenmatt as "the most prominent author of Swiss literature following the Second World War," which is of course a highly problematic statement since Dürrenmatt has always been rivalled if not surpassed by his Swiss contemporary Max Frisch.

Reading and re-reading the poems of this collection one is

left with the impression that their larger part has either become quite dated or never aspired to a level of poetic excellence and cultural importance in the first place. Representative of the first category are Dürrenmatt's well-known poetic diatribes against the corporate world and its hypocrisies, while typical of the second category are the author's personal memories of lost friends and collaborators in artistic endeavors or other lyrical musings about quotidian events such as smoking a cigar, looking out of the window and others. By contrast, a series of poems which describe cosmic scenarios display smooth rhythms and supple rhymes, thereby testifying to a talent the author clearly did not care to develop to a larger extent.

The translator does not attempt to preserve the occasional rhymes of Dürrenmatt's poems which might be just as well, since the results of such endeavors are often more contorted than convincing. Apart from that, the translations are very commendable, rendering the original texts in authentic sounding equivalencies. The volume concludes with "Hymns and Curses," which is an English rendition of a brief scholarly essay by Peter Rüedi, a succinct "Editor's Note," a helpful list of textual explanations, two pages of brief biographies of author and translator, and an index of translated poems.

Frederick A. Lubich
Old Dominion University

Ilma Rakusa. *Steppe*, translated by Solveig Emerson. Burning Deck, Providence, 1997. Pp. 80. Paper \$10.

The twelve miniature narratives of the Swiss-Slovenian-Hungarian writer and translator (born 1946, won Swiss Book Prize 2009) are in their density close to her poetry. In an enriched world of ideas with a reference to Russian literature (Chekhov) and culture, among others, she offers a wickerwork of linguistic reflections on the game of existence. Men and women who are

Copyright of International Poetry Review is the property of University of North Carolina at Greensboro and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.