

FRANCO BUFFONI. WINGS: SELECTED POEMS 2000-2005

Franco Buffoni. *Wings: Selected Poems 2000-2005*. Emanuel di Pasquale, tr. New York. Chelsea. 2008. 131 pages. \$20. ISBN 978-0-9725271-5-6

Franco Buffoni (b. 1948) has been among Italy's celebrated poets since the 1990s, a professor of comparative literature in Rome who also edits a respected journal of literary criticism. This sophisticated bilingual collection, lucidly translated by poet Emanuel di Pasquale, has just been published in the impressive Chelsea Editions series. *Wings* includes three startling sequences--two fleeting tableaux of boyhood from *The Profile of Mount Rosa* and *Theios*, and the graphic strophes of torture from *Guerra*.

Buffoni's impressions under Mount Rosa's shadow recall a sensitive, studious boy, tracing snowmelt in town and valley, self-observed through evolving perspectives. At age eleven he decides that "there is no reason to get carried away / in games played with cousins, / to follow them in their hurling of bricks at / the neighbors dahlias," merely to "truly feel part of the gang." Instead, he instructs himself to "go calmly back to your drawings, / to your homework maps to complete, / you will win." However, he adds a warning: "You will have to suffer." In *Theios*, stressful male sexuality turns language from lyric innocence into harsh experience, and "Time, fictitious spaceship / moves us indelicately" along that path. Impressionist becomes expressionist, realizing boys are being "bent pounded / gnawed smoked militarized," because they "must be inhabited." Resisting the violence in oneself alerts him to ingrained cultural violence.

Guerra faces the "Ghost in the blood and bones of history / that will pursue me from my infancy," and he spies them "in lodges academies coffee houses / where decorations of gods, goddesses and seasons / personifications of virtues / victories cities states confessions insist / from the stucco, if I describe you it is to consign you / to the silence of my memory." This limpid poetry of memory thrives in postmodern fragments, but always superbly rendered by Emanuel di Pasquale, an award-winning translator both from Italian to English and back. We perceive a larger design viewed from above, emerging in precise, intricate details. It is not a matter of understanding these clear passages in English, but only of connecting one to the next, first to last. Rereading Franco Buffoni brings his subtle images and cosmopolitan references into sharper focus, an effort that rewards all serious readers.

Robert Bonazzi San Antonio, Texas

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