Translations from the Natural World

Les A. Murray

Translations from the Natural World Les Murray has become regarded as one of the most respected poets writing in the English language. Born in 1938, Murray published his first poetry collection, THE ILEX TREE (with Geoffrey J. Lehmann), in 1965. Since then, he has published a number of accomplished volumes, as well as a verse novel and some intriguing essay collections. In his work, Murray has expressed a strong sense of what it means to be Australian. He has a keen ability to use language in imaginative and profound ways. Whether constructing his poems within established poetic constraints or making use of more experimental forms, Murray’s vast linguistic skills allow him to succeed poetically no matter what convention he chooses. In TRANSLATIONS FROM THE NATURAL WORLD, the poet’s rare gift of illuminating natural settings and the creatures that inhabit them is authoritatively realized. The second section of the collection is made up of the poetic sequence “Presence: Translations from the Natural World.” This sequence contains forty poems, in which Murray speaks through the voices of various living things, including plants, fish, birds, and animals. With such titles as “Eagle Pair,” “Insect Mating Flight,” “Cockspur Bush,” “The Snake’s Heat Organ,” “Pigs,” “Spermaceti,” and “Raven, Sotto Voce,” the poet describes— with humor and respect—how remarkable and resilient life is in its various forms. This volume cannot be praised too highly. Murray can bend language into marvelous constructs. TRANSLATIONS FROM THE NATURAL WORLD will stand as a testament to this fine poet’s linguistic reach.