ForeWord Reviews

POETRY

Before Saying Any of the Great Words: Selected Poems
David Huerta
Mark Schafer, translator
Copper Canyon Press
978-1-55659-287-4
(January 2009)

In an early poem David Huerta describes his own work and the context in which he writes: "Under a leaden sky words and syllables / were dancing in my throat."

Huerta one of Mexico's leading poets (and the son of another famous Mexican poet Efraín Huerta) is carefully translated here by Mark Schafer. Schafer makes Huerta who might be seen as "difficult" accessible to readers without sacrificing any of the startling images leaps of meaning and emotional resonance the poet uses to great effect.

This book of selected works begins with early poems (Huerta published his first book while still at univer-sity) the next section provides selected parts of his astonishing poem *Incurable* (said to be the longest poem ever written in Mexico at nearly 400 pages) and the final section titled "After Incurable" provides us with shorter more concentrated more lapidary poems which nevertheless maintain Huerta's uncanny ability to write words syllables lines and poems packed with personal emotion and sharp insights.

Copper Canyon Press continues its highly regarded and important task of providing English-language readers with the best of poetry from Mexico as well as many other parts of the world. As usual the book is handsomely designed and the typography is clean and pleasant to read. Those who are interested in the poetry of our close neighbor to the south or simply good poetry will find David Huerta's latest collection a remarkable and satisfying read.