

Kaleidoscope: Selected Poems

P. K. Page

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Fans of the prolific Canadian poet P. K. Page, rejoice. Not only is her newest selected poems, *Kaleidoscope: Selected Poems*, available, but the collection will eventually be accompanied by an online scholarly edition to aid in research and the further understanding of Page's poems. *Kaleidoscope* itself spans the writer's entire career, including previously unpublished work, some from as early as 1940. Throughout the collection, Page's artwork appears as well: intricate black-and-white etchings that complement her verse.

Page's poems are carefully sensible, yet immersed in emotional exploration. She makes whimsical use of rhyme, granting her creations a songlike cast even as they tackle solemn subjects like war and lost love. In the poem "Cullen," rhyme takes the reader through a young man's path toward soldiering: "Cullen evacuated overnight, / he knew no other region to explore; / discovered it was nineteen thirty-nine / and volunteered at once and went to war / wondering what on earth he was fighting for." Here, song turns quickly to critique: "He knew there was a reason but couldn't find it / and marched to battle half an inch behind it." Cullen, a reoccurring character for Page, shows us the absurdities of war—a message still exigent even after three-quarters of a century. Throughout *Kaleidoscope*, readers can track the evolution of her rhyming nonce forms over the span of her career.

The book also highlights the vast collection of Page's exploratory, diverse free verse poems. Page, never tethered to one style or form, innovates with both line and stanza throughout the anthology. Whereas some poems make use of long, prose-like lines, others, like the poem "Ecology," move in lines as brief as they are powerful. "If a boy / eats an apple," the speaker asks, "because a bee / collects nectar, / what happens / because a boy / eats an apple?" This formal variation highlights Page's poetic dexterity, giving the collection a page-turning momentum—a hard-wrought treat among Selected Works poetry tomes.

Whether in this print edition—the first in a ten-volume series of Page's Collected Works—or the forthcoming online compendium, *Kaleidoscope* marks a stunning representation of Page's career. Readers new to her work will quickly find themselves situated, thanks to a thorough introduction and comprehensive textual notes; those already acquainted with Page have her unpublished work to discover. As the poet passed away early last year, the collection serves as a commemorative retrospective as well as a book of poems that explores humanity's darker moments even as its playful diction reminds us of life's joys.

RACHEL MENNIES (March 1, 2011)

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