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Selected Poems by Peter Redgrove. Jonothan Cape, $15.99.

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"[T]hey seem to be full of fine things said unintentionally—in the intensity of working out conceits." What Keats says of Shakespeare's sonnets can, with a little revision, be applied to Peter Redgrove's poems: they seem to be full of fine things said sporadically in the intensity of working out concepts. For over forty years, Redgrove has been applying his training as a scientist and his interest in and study of Jungian psychoanalysis to his verse and using his verse to share his research and his findings. The results have been copious—Redgrove has published over twenty books of poems—and varied. In *The Lover, the Dreamer and the World: The Poetry of Peter Redgrove,* Neil Roberts states, "Since the poems are ... powerful and distinctive, the experience of reading them in any number can be like being at sea in a shapeless and limitless substance called 'Red grove' ." Rather than immersing the reader in "Redgrove," *Selected Poems* showcases the fine things the prolific and often ponderous Redgrovian sea has produced.

Although almost all of the concerns of Redgrove's thought—overcoming difference, integrating self with other, investigating various manifestations of archetypes, promoting synesthetic experience, challenging enlightenment knowledge with the shadow's mysteries—are represented in *Selected Poems,* the poems chosen often transcend mere representation by complication or seductive fragmentation. While many of Redgrove's popular, didactic poems such as "Without Eyes," an attempt to dramatize the power of the non—visual senses, and "The Idea of Entropy at Maenporth Beach," a challenge to Stevens' ghostly, sonic muse which advances instead the cause of a muse of mud, "of lickerish earth"—are included, these poems are grouped with other works that use Redgrovian concepts as a mere starting point. For example, "Six Odes," a poem concerned in general with the archetypal relationship between man and woman, plays this relationship out in six wonderfully strange and elusive sections. The second section, "Water-Lady," begins:

> He asked her to go into the wood and tell him what she saw there.
> She walked between the trees and the first thing she liked was
> the pond.
> She knelt down and stripped off the thin film of reflections, rolled
> it up and put it into her pocket to show she had been there.
> The water's new skin reflected with more brilliance and better
> colour.
> So she knelt down and took this new skin...

Though spiked with commentary and self-critique, "A Twelvemonth" mostly engages the surreal:

In the month known as William
we watch the deer grazing on seaweed;
police open the strongroom of Christ.

In the month called Clocks
the poets decide
whether they shall draw salary,

And in the month called Horsewhip
they pluck their secret insurance
from the rotting rafters.

That mirrors, reproduction, and self-referentiality—many of Redgrove's early poems employ the ghosts of haunted houses as metaphors, thus plucking their necessary material "from the rotting rafters"—are features of many poems is not surprising; the selection of such poems seems a conscientious attempt to make Redgrove's poetry appealing not only to those who read Freud and Jung but also to those who read Lacan and Baudrillard.

Combining the demands of having to reduce a massive body of work into one volume with the effort to show Redgrove at his most postmodern results, of course, in new results. For example, in *Selected Poems* Redgrove's dramatic quest for wholeness is largely transformed into a more constructed contemplation. That is, while in *Selected Poems* there are plenty of instances of Redgrovian *sturm*—in "On the Patio," the speaker drinks in the midst of a downpour from a "wineglass overflowing with thunderwater" then "[b]angs it back down on the thundery steel table for a refill"—those instances feel somewhat isolated and contained when considered apart from the often systematic high emotion of Redgrove's writing. Neil Roberts describes Redgrove's early poetry as constructing in a narrative in which "[a] male protagonist, a young family man, tormented by thoughts of death, at the mercy of his own unconscious, and uneasy in his relation to the natural world, constructs his house as a shell against the invasion of these forces and in it tries to celebrate love, parenthood and nature." However, the early poems reprinted in *Selected Poems* have little torment, powerlessness, or uneasiness about them; instead, the opening poems of *Selected Poems*—with their haunting that turn out to be signs for memory, desire, and loss, thus displaying the shifting realms of the psychic and the physical, the basis of the later work—seem less the impetus for a quest and more a threshold, an initial premise. The well-organized procession of poems which follows flows smoothly from this start.

Additionally, the overall seriousness of *Selected Poems* does not indicate Redgrove's willingness to employ humor to undercut and play with his concepts. Although *Selected Poems* includes "Sniffing Tom" to toy with one of Redgrove's concepts, synaesthesia—instead of peeping, this Tom sniffs "the saddles of girls' cycles"—other concepts are left untouched. For example, the spider, a recurrent symbol of death in Redgrove's poetry and in *Selected Poems,* is not subjected to the treatment it receives in the unselected "Renfield Before His Master" in which Dracula, who drank the blood of his victims "spiderly," finally met his match when " ... fly-swatting Van Helsing clapped his fat palms / Smack and said 'No more of those,' wiping his hands / / Stained from the stake down immaculate spun hose."

In many ways, the notion of a selection seems antithetical to Redgrove, whose project is based largely on the attempt to convince readers of the value of the murky, the rough, the flawed, and perhaps this is why Redgrove lets an editor—for this selection, Robin Robertson—do the selecting. That said, it must be noted that *Selected Poems* does very well exactly what a selection should: present a poet's work in a manner that will most likely appeal to new readers and indicate a new perspective for those who thought they knew the poet. Hopefully, the fine things presented in *Selected Poems* will entice readers to dive in to Redgrove's work, to feel its multiple currents, to attend to its dark and joyous tidings.