



Dear Darkness: Poems

By Kevin Young

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Delivered in Young's classic bluesy tone, this powerful collection of poems about the American family, smoky Southern food, and the losses that time inevitably brings "bristles with life, nerve and, best of all, wit" (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

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Dear Darkness: Poems By Kevin Young Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Perhaps the most prominent African-American poet of his generation, the prolific Young (*For the Confederate Dead*) begins his sixth book, which gathers sets of independent short poems—some very funny, some heartbreaking, almost all in deftly enjambed, uncommonly various lines—with evocations of his childhood, at once cozy and surrounded by half-secret threats: Back/ in the day, my mother cut my afro/ every few months, bathroom layered/ with headlines proclaiming the world's end. Young then launches into odes to foods, many (but not all) of them from African-American traditions: I know you're the blues/ because loving you/ may kill me, says Ode to Pork. Other work finds lessons in country and country-rock music (On Being the Only Black Person at the Johnny Paycheck Concert). For all the humor, and all the autobiography, in this big book, Young digs deepest and sounds most powerful when he returns to the unlucky, unlovely, generalized personae of blues, who become in his hands at once a source of energy and a means for elegy: Let me be what/ dust has to be, settling// over everything, he says in the bluesy Lullaby, & I promise to dream// of new houses & old/ loves no longer. (*Sept.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Young is a fluent and bold interpreter of American culture and attitude, writing shrewd blues and droll lyrics that upend and undo catchphrases, familiar figures, and down-home habits. Prizewinning and popular with readers beyond the usual poetry aficionados, Young follows his historically oriented *For the Confederate Dead* (2007) with his sixth and most autobiographical collection, in which he remembers his dead, especially his recently deceased father. Looking back to his Louisiana childhood, Young finds surprising connections as he writes of stars, mosquitoes, his father's "sweet blood," sustenance, and funerals. Red dirt, buzzing wasps, kissing cousins, haircuts, and TV all form moiré patterns as vaporous memories are condensed into poetry. Young reaches for myth but can't resist wit, paying hilarious tribute to aunties and uncles, dealing in double entendres, capturing the topsy-turvy, otherworldly ambience of Las Vegas. And even while deeply mourning for his father, he pulls a Neruda and writes funny, sly odes to the ordinary, focusing on food, metaphors for desire, the life force, and death's endless consumption. --Donna Seaman

Review

"Young is a fluent and bold interpreter of American culture and attitude, writing shrewd blues and droll lyrics that upend and undo catchphrases, familiar figures, and down-home habits." —*Booklist*

Users Review

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