

DARKNESS AND LIGHT BY KEVIN DUTTON

Reviewed by Oke Mbachu

Darkness and Light, Kevin Dutton's new book of poems, covers a spectrum of themes that range from social topics—such as the environment, technology, politics, nature and the pervasive presence of advertising—to experiences (personal and otherwise) that address love, loss, suffering, solitude and hope. It is a full-length collection of poems, running a total of 84 pages. A common thread binds the poems' varying topics together: Dutton's use of rhyme. The poems employ a myriad of rhyme schemes—internal-, half-, and end-rhymes, and differing forms of meter. These are done profusely and skillfully, giving the poems a rhythmic and musical quality. References to music are also a theme that can be found in the collection. Poems such as "The black garden," "Four walls," "Jealousy," "Change," etc. use line repetitions which serve as a sort of chorus, and also illuminate sentiments central to the poem. "This is the end" (which might remind some of a similarly titled Doors' song) references Morrissey's "Every day is like Sunday," and another poem is titled "Always something there to remind me" (a still semi-famous '80's song by Naked Eyes.) These references also add to Dutton's attention to popular culture, which he presents as a ubiquitous and infiltrative thing (and this, he asserts, is not necessarily a good thing).

Dutton is a British poet, hence insights and references to British culture appear in some of the poems (for example, 'curb' is spelled 'kerb'—nice!). This does not, however, take away from the universality of the poems, as there are also references to American pop culture, nor are the poems necessarily set in any particular place. Dutton also wears the shoes of 'environmentalist poet,' for some of the poems address the onslaught of technology, and its simultaneous erasure of the natural. The following lines from the poem "Neon" highlight this well: "Light pollution out the back/ Fades the pretty stars to black/ Light bulb flower beds bloom 24/7/ Murk-lit cloud distorts my heaven/ Pushes back the stars so pure/ Power cut the only cure." "Concrete Jungle" follows the same path, with lines like "Rural beauty has been taken/ Moulded into dark skyscrapers/ Choking fumes where once so clear/ Cars now roam where once were deer." Other poems are also quite political, touching upon contemporary issues such as poverty, war, etc.

The thematic flip-side to the above would be the personal poems in the collection, which give the reader a glimpse into the writer's trials and triumphs. Separate from the rhymes schemes that beautify these poems is an underlying pathos and poignancy that can tug on the heart's strings; these poems arouse sympathy for the human experience. Humor is also present in some poems, fitting in well to the mix, and fleshing out the book.

Dutton is a sympathetic, compassionate, and keen-eyed poet speaking up for the under-privileged and the less-fortunate. Nevertheless, "Fireworks" is a bright poem that reminds the reader that between dark and light lies a whole array of colors, that beauty persists. The differing, and sometimes subtle, rhyme schemes will have the reader

engaged and entertained trying to observe them all, and the morals to these conscious and necessary poems should resonate.

Darkness and Light is available in print and in downloadable form at lulu.com.

“Review of *Darkness and Light* by Kevin Dutton” © 2006 by Oke Mbachu

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