



Beyond This Dark House

Guy Gavriel Kay

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Before Guy Gavriel Kay became known for his groundbreaking works of speculative fiction he was an accomplished poet, his work appearing in major literary journals such as *The Antigone Review* and *Prism*. Through the years, while writing his dramatic international bestsellers, Kay has continued to quietly explore the paths and boundaries of poetry as well.

Now for the first time, Guy Gavriel Kay's poetry has been gathered and selected for publication.

Readers of contemporary poetry will be captivated by the exquisite craft and power of these poems. Some are ironic and austere, slyly tracing the interplay of writer and world, present and past; others are sensual, even erotic, charting the mercurial but abiding nature of passion-in love, in language, in history.

Beyond This Dark House Details

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From Reader Review Beyond This Dark House for online ebook

Paul says

a bit of a mixed bag. some pretty good and thought provoking, some less so. for the most part better than the poetry in his novels (with the exception of "Rachel's Song"), but I have to say I prefer his fiction to his poetry.

Chris says

I really don't like poetry. But this is pretty readable, and I wasn't surprised since I like Kay's poetry that filters into his novels.

Favorites are the title poem, and "Guinevere at Almesbury".

David Robins says

He's better at prose.

Kelly says

I always did get the feeling that Kay wished that he could be a poet, rather than a novelist. His writing certainly yearns towards it. I like his flowing, descriptive prose better than the distilled form, but there are several lovely ones not to be missed, particularly the one devoted to his relationship with his father.

Heather says

I really love the poems that connect to Camelot. Most of the modern ones I didn't connect with as much.

Ruhegeist says

I'll stick to his books. Several really good.

Kathleen says

It was interesting, but I would not recommend the author based upon his poetry. He should stick to prose - long live the Fionavar Tapestry.

Nikki says

Guy Gavriel Kay's prose is always beautiful, so it follows that his poetry would be, too. I haven't actually read every poem in this volume yet, but I've read enough to know that there are some gems. I especially liked "Crystals":

"When you touched me
I thought my heart
would crash through my breastbone to lie,
pulsing and impossible,
on your bed."

and "On The Balcony":

"I am in love with where I am
but more in love with you."

I'm looking forward to reading the rest of this volume and keeping it on my shelf forever.

Horus says

Reading this on my Kobo, I have come to realize that digital poetry collections are not appealing to me. I like the ability to flip back and forth, re-read, compare etc. At least on my device, this cannot happen easily. The poetry however, is quite good. I tend to like his fictional poetry more than the self-reflecting. Although, that being said there is one about his return trip to Oxford many years after graduation that I quite liked both the imagery and sentiment. For those who like his prose, I don't know that this compendium would be immediately appealing unless you are also a fan of poetry.

Charles says

Ah, this collection reminds me that I should be reading more poetry. Not that it was exactly what I was expecting. And not that I wasn't just a little disappointed that there wasn't a little more spec. But the poetry is great, the images impacting, and the flow amazing. I'm a big fan of Kay, and I've always admired the poetry that he put into his work. Much of the time, after all, poetry is important to the novels he writes. It comes up in Tigana, and much more prominently in The Lions of Al-Rassan and Under Heaven. And here are some poems not from characters but from the man himself, writing much more about this place and time, about longing and loss, and it is a joy to read.

There are some themes that resonate in these poems, longing being the biggest one. Someone being absent, far away, perhaps dead or perhaps lost to time or any number of other possibilities. But there is that, of a man walking or driving some lonely place and feeling that pull back toward something familiar, someone familiar. It's a very human thing, and the poems as a whole were things I could relate with. The images, the places that the poems went, are rendered well and evoke powerful emotions and feelings. As someone who has not traveled far, it was interesting to read the poems painting a picture of these places.

Of course, there was a part of me that wanted more like from his books, more speculative works. What is there works, and I probably liked those best, when I started to evoke mythology and ideas like that and tie them back to life, to feelings. There was definitely a lot to sift through in these poems, and while not many of them were what I would really call fun they were fascinating to read. If I had to assign a season to them it would be autumn, that sense of slight decay and the looming threat of winter. There is hope, to be sure, and a beauty that doesn't exist in other times, but also a melancholy that lingers.

All told, I really enjoyed the poems. I wanted more. I wanted, perhaps, some of those he wrote for novels included, but I'm sure rights on that would be confusing and they probably would only foul up the overall feel of this collection. It was powerful and made me want to read more poetry. So it succeeded in that, and earns an 8/10.

Mary Soon Lee says

Guy Gavriel Kay is one of my favorite fantasy novelists. Now, having read this short book, but not yet having had time for it to sink in, he threatens to become one of my favorite poets. It is not that I liked every poem in this book. Some were not to my taste. But many of the poems were very good and several were outstanding.

In the opening poem, "Night Drive: Elegy," the narrator remembers his father. There are a multitude of poems written in memory of parents or friends, so that sometimes it seems that there is little room to add anything worthwhile to their collective weight. For me, Guy Gavriel Kay has done so. For the most part, the poem is written plainly. The details are specific, their impact universal:

The drive back home,
just the two of us, end of a work day. He'd steer
with one hand at twelve o'clock and
an elbow out the open window. No one
ever born had hands I'd ever rather feel
enclosing mine. Then. Now. The day
the son we named for him was born.

The book includes quite a few poems about love that are seemingly autobiographical, of which I think my favorite is the closing poem, "Finding Day." There are also a number of assorted mainstream poems, one of which, "If I Should Fly Across The Sea Again," I loved.

And then, appropriately for a fantasy novelist, there are a number of fantastical poems. These range from variations on old myths, to poems where the strangeness seemed to be the author's own invention. I particularly liked "Being Orpheus," "Medea," "Various Things," "At The Death of Pan," which has humor in

it, "Hero," and "Shalott." But more than any of these, I loved "Guinevere at Almesbury," a masterful revisiting of the worn-out tales of Camelot:

There was no place to hide.
I was brought into another life
and began to live with grief,

for Arthur knew. He knew me as he knew
each single star that swung about like
pointers to his north.

...

I see them on a forest path,
riding together. Dappled, autumn
leaves, a slanting sun just risen.
Or in battle side by side
with bloodied swords,
in the hard north. Or talking
a winter night away beside a fire
in a kingdom that has not fallen.

A poem very different from the opening poem, but both of them superb, poems to be treasured and to which to return.

Abcdarian says

3.5 stars. Some beautiful, as I thought they would be from his novels; some inscrutably personal.

Northumbria

... and I saw horsemen:
indentations in the sky
above the heathered hills,
running away to Scotland
five hundred years ago.
The hills are then, easily.
The morning sun seems to want
those riders as much as I,
appearing in bright felicity
to shine on other times,
other worlds.

Jess says

I loved some poems and totally missed the point of others. I felt I needed some outside information to properly access certain ones, but could easily picture the scenes and stories in others.

Mel says

It's probably a two-star book, but I'm a long time fan, so . . .
