



Ringling Ear: Black Poets Lean South (The Cave Canem Poetry Prize)

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The South: to render all that it means to an African American takes someone with acutely tuned senses, someone with a patience, a passion even, for the region's history and contradictions. It takes a poet. In this new anthology, the first of its kind, more than one hundred contemporary black poets laugh at and cry about, pray for and curse, flee and return to—the South.

Voices new to the scene appear in *The Ringling Ear* alongside some of the leading names in American literature today, including Sonia Sanchez, Yusef Komunyakaa, Harryette Mullen, Nikki Giovanni, Kevin Young, Cornelius Eady, and Al Young. The southern worlds opened up by these poets are echoed in how their poems are grouped, under headings like "Music, Food, and Work: Heeding the Lamentation and Roar of Things Made by Hand," or "Religion and Nature: The Lord Looks Out for Babies and Fools," or "Love, Flesh, and Family: The Hush and Holler Portraits."

"Not all of us on these pages have come to or from the South by the same dirt road," says anthology editor Nikky Finney. "We have not chosen our dark olive words from the same patch of earth. Some have come by way of birth and others have followed street musicians and urban corner preachers, dream and myth, to stand before its pine and iron gates."

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