

**Drowning Like Li Po In a River of Red Wine.
Selected Poems 1970-2010.**

By A.D. Winans

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I want to use the word *classic* here, classic in the sense that three-hundred years down the line, in college courses on American literature, Winans has to be there as representative of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Winans, Lifshin, Potts, Krech, Luschei...the list gets long, but Winans is up there at the top because no one captures our contemporary world the way he does: "out into/the harsh night into/the lonely streets/of north beach stoned/on words walking/the streets of San Francisco watching/the old people make their way to mass//old men and women leaving behind their sins/dressed in simple hats and death black shawls/bowing to the eternal mumble/of dead saints dressed in gold thirsting/for the wine that is denied them,,//the chapel of hope were Italian priests/weaned on dago red ply evil thoughts from/sterile minds toying with/the heads of the masses staring always/staring searching for paradise..." "North Beach Poem," p.54.

Reality is all of its up, down and middle dimensions, The Real the way it really is in its commonness, everydayness, absurdities, hypocrisies and sincerities.

These days, almost hitting eighty, I think a lot about somehow capturing the unique, fascinating world that surrounds me. Like Dickens almost film-capturing nineteenth century real-world England. And that's just what Winans does, doesn't twist-play with words, imitate fancy diamond-cut contemporary poetry that

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screams "Academic!" at you. Real words/worlds in real time: "I'm out walking the streets again/Like a crime scene photographer Past Saint Paul's Church where/The smell of altar boys permeates/The air...//The tongues of harlots call out/Like hungry birds diving for scraps of food/Passing over the head/Of the elderly priest/Standing on the church steps/Waving his hand in the air/as if carrying on/A private conversation with God." ("Walking the Streets Like a Cowboy Searching for a Miracle," p. 247)

Winans isn't a cynic but just tells it as it is. Never confessional, treating the reader like he/she was a psychotherapist, Winans is the essence of a reality-capturer who especially captures his hometown, San Francisco, and all his fellow poets and artists who surrounded him over the years. Like in his poem "For Jack Micheline": "He was a high note/Of wailing jazz/The spark that ignites/A fire/He was a shot of heroin/A fifth of Jim Beam/A shaman a con man/A vagabond poet/Who shuffled words like/A riverboat gambler." (p.339)

The past never leaves him. He's also acutely in the present, but there's an historian in him that won't let the past go: "What's left of a classic 1956 Chevy/Lies like a war zone corpse/In a deserted battleground/Hubcaps gone seats gutted/Steering wheel pushed/Into dashboard..." ("Bayshore Junkyard," p.363).

Don't just wait three hundred years, though, to deify Winans, but immerse yourself in him now, and before you know it, your own life will turn intro- and retro-

spective, like taking a course in how to see yourself in your contemporary/historical context. A great volume! Forty years of capturing the world the way it really is.