

Review by B.L. Kennedy

Well, those great folks at Bottle of Smoke Press are at it again. This time it's the publication of *Drowning like Li Po in a River of Red Wine: Selected Poems 1970-2010* by A.D. Winans. This is an extremely handsome hardcover collection that any bibliophile would be happy in placing on their bookshelf and any lover of poetry would devour.

I have known A.D. Winans since 1997, and over the years, I've reviewed many of his chapbooks and regular books for the *Rattlesnake Review* (a publication in Sacramento.) Sometimes I gave him great praise, and sometimes lukewarm praise, but I've never found it the case where I had nothing to say concerning the author's poetry. Now, with this collection, I get to reread many of those poems in a respectful and handsome format. This is an outstanding collection that I could not easily put down. The poems included run the gambit of the author's body of work since 1970 to present. At times, with some of the earlier poems in this book, I felt let down with the structure and what the author/poet was attempting to do. This is basically because I was approaching the poems with the wrong attitude, for I was looking at A.D. Winans the man as opposed to A.D. Winans the poet. Let me explain: A.D. Winans the man bleeds from the heart and places it on the page, whereas A.D. Winans the poet will at times leave the reader with a feeling that the poem is forced instead of completely finished.

But in the end, a good literary critic can only come to the conclusion that the poet's output is respectful to both the reader and the writer. A good example is "Tales of Crazy John", which Winans composed in 1975. These are remarkable poems which have left me with deep feelings towards his subject matter. Throughout this collection, Winans writes tributes to other poets such as Kenneth Patchen, d.a. levy, Bob Kaufman, Jack Micheline, and always tributes to Charles Bukowski and the author's beloved city of San Francisco. Most likely the strongest poems in the book are "13 Jazz Poems", for here Winans writes about a subject close to his heart. These poems are polished and unique of voice, and I simply love them. The Panama poems from his 2006 chapbook "This Land is Not My Land" grab the reader with their style and outspokenness.

All in all, Winans the poet places his heart on the table. So if you have the extra cash to invest, I would suggest you contact Bottle of Smoke Press and order a copy of *Drowning Like Li Po in a River of Red Wine* as soon as possible. You will not go wrong with this fine and insightful collection of the poet's work, which in his own right has more or less become a legend.