



**A. D. Winans – Four Poems**

**POEM FOR A POET FRIEND**

I know this poet who plays  
The Poetry Biz game  
Knows how to trade favors  
In 24 different flavors  
His days pass faster than the  
Muteness of his message  
He could have been a standup comedian  
A burlesque dancer had he been born a woman  
This master weaver spinning tales like  
Jerry Lewis courting Abbot and Costello  
Seriousness is being treated like a sickness  
A cancer to be avoided  
Its grand slams and elite poetry festivals  
Run by Grand Marshals and their elves  
The wasteland of blurred visions  
Lies like an idle landmine waiting  
To explode in the minds of circus clowns

These poets have become wizards of attack  
To them a crisis is a loose bowel movement  
A skipped heartbeat or two  
But what of the crisis of the social system  
A system of calculated murder  
A system of chemical and environmental cancer  
A system of the poor and elderly  
A system of sadness  
How do I laugh about this

How do I laugh about my brothers in prison  
My dead comrades racing across blood stained clouds  
Their bruised feet bringing down rain  
A rain that does not cleanse but  
Leaves behind scars and torn flesh  
And still the games go on  
Red poets who write love songs for Stalin  
Populist poets turned businessmen  
Hanging out at Spec's and the Café Trieste  
Courting the favors of the NEA  
Campaigning to be the next city Poet Laureate

I can't wear the easy grin  
It is an ill-fitting suit  
My mind is a tailor who fits  
Me with needled threads  
And yes there is a place for laughter  
And I too can pen a funny line but  
Poetry is more than laughter  
More than stepping up on stage  
One hand on the poem  
The other on the applause meter  
And it was a Russian poet who said  
"The function of poetry must be  
To make us blush with shame."  
And it was an American poet who said  
"The dams reverse themselves and want  
To go stand alone in the desert"  
That is why these poems are sad  
The long-dead running over the fields  
The masses sinking down  
The light in the children's faces  
Fading at six and seven  
These are the voices I heed  
Knowing the poet must believe  
In what he says and writes  
That a poet's responsibility  
Goes beyond the written word

A poet must be angry  
But he must be able to sing too  
His words must melt like sweet honey  
On a blistered tongue

For flat-backed whales sing and birds sing  
But my poet friend has forgotten how to sing  
It shows in his eyes  
It shows in his nervous laughter  
It shows in his words on the page

My poet friend writes a poem a day  
He spends his time in coffee houses  
And courts the favors of those in power  
He does not visit the jails  
The prisons the forests the bowery  
The freezing North Dakota dawn  
He does not feel the whisper  
Of the secret that passes over the plains

#### THEY'RE AT IT AGAIN

(preparing for mid-term elections)

They say they want to clean up the Tenderloin  
Going after the massage parlors and prostitutes  
In their annual crack down on sin charade  
When the real sin is the homeless  
Battered women and children  
Gay bashing wall street criminals  
Perjury and obstruction of justice  
By politicians with no shame  
It's all status-quo business as usual  
As we hire more cops to protect business interests  
Build more prisons to discourage revolution  
While cutting back on food stamps for the poor  
And school breakfasts and lunches  
For 40,000 children  
In order to give the richest of the rich  
Another tax break

The finest minds of our generation enslaved  
In hallowed University classrooms  
Or working in scientific labs creating  
New weapons of mass destruction  
The hungry jaws of capitalism chewing  
Up the poor and institutionalizing the elderly  
But not before squeezing every last drop of blood  
Out of the working class man and woman

The young dance like puppets on a string  
In a Disneyland production  
Fox news presenting “fair and balanced news”  
In an unbalanced way  
As our elected representatives primp  
In front of their mirrors  
Preparing to destroy timberland and rain forests  
And flood the ocean with oil spills  
In payment for political contributions  
Marching to the voting polls to keep  
The status quo alive and well

#### 71<sup>st</sup> BIRTHDAY POEM

I like wild women who drink straight shots  
And lick their lips when flirting  
I like demure women  
Who look like librarians  
And wear long dresses that touch the floor  
But I’ve retired from the game although  
Not of my own choosing  
Forced to sit on the sidelines  
And eyeball the show  
As I watch a young woman walk by  
With her orange blossom smell  
A false promise lost in skipped heart beats  
That plays tricks with my shadow  
Trailing behind like an old junkyard dog  
Walking behind his master

#### LADY DEATH

she's a bitch, a whore,  
a toad. she's two-hundred  
pounds of lard hiding in  
a one-hundred pound body

she convinced Napoleon  
he was six-feet tall and  
sent him off to his Waterloo  
she lit the last cigar of George Burns  
blowing smoke in his face  
minutes before he died  
she convinced Custer he was God  
the match that set Rome on fire  
she made love to Eva Braun  
before fucking Hitler in his bunker  
seconds before dousing him  
with gasoline  
she disguised herself in the robes  
of the Pope blessing the  
bomb before it fell on Hiroshima  
she pulled the trigger that blew  
d.a. levy's head off  
then repeated it with Hunter Thompson  
just for the fun of it  
she sucked-off Buddha before  
he could cross his legs  
and become an idol  
she's a mafia hit-man  
a sniper in waiting  
she's a terrorist with  
a bomb hidden in her skirt  
she lit the match that set  
Joan of Arc on fire  
she built the cross that  
Jesus died on  
she convinced Houdini  
he could come back from the dead  
she burrowed her way into the vagina  
of the Madonna and turned Caen against Abel  
she's in the testicles of every male  
primed and ready to be released  
sucking the life out of you  
like a child sucks the juice from  
a straw

**A. D. Winans** is a native San Francisco poet and graduate of San Francisco State College. His poetry has appeared in hundreds of literary magazines and anthologies, including *City Lights Journal*, *Margie*, *Rattle*, *Poetry Australia*, *the New York Quarterly*, *the Outlaw Bible of American Poetry*, and *the Beatitude 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Anthology*. He is the author of fifty books and chapbooks of poetry and prose. In 2005 a song poem of his was performed at New York's Tully Hall. In 2006 he was awarded a PEN National Josephine Miles award for excellence in literature. In 2007 Presa Press published a book of his selected poems. In 2009 he was given a PEN Oakland Lifetime Achievement Award.