

ONE OF US ONE NIGHT

By: Mark Wisniewski

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Review By: Charles P. Ries

Mark Wisniewski writes long prose, short stories, and very short line poetry. He has held two Regent's Fellowships in Creative Writing from UC-Davis and won the 2006 Tobias Wolff Award. It is exhilarating to read poetry informed and guided by the muscles of a long writer - not just a poet, but a true story teller. One sees the usual conventions of the long form writing in Wisniewski's poetry: dialogue, narration, tension, and structure all in a highly compressed form. This compression is further amplified because Wisniewski prefers short lines and limited punctuation. He gives the reader just enough information to hang his meanings on. There are many gems in *One Of Us One Night*. His long opening poem, "Nebraska" is a beauty. Here is an excerpt:

a woman pulled over
& let me in

she was as ugly
as that October in Nebraska
& I was thumbing my way
away from myself

trucks full of hope for
sale swishing past

& all around us

were night-hidden wheat
stalks & silos & children who'd never
be rock stars

well this woman smoked & talked
about time in jail

& a man
who'd been hers

about her hatred of him
& all of them

they were all pussy-
sniffing bastards

In his four page poem, "Omaha" I sometimes found the short lines and the rapid bulleting of words tiring and making it hard for me to follow the poem. I wondered how this poem and a few others would read if reconstructed using longer lines and stanzas, but each poet to his own devices. One Of Us One Night is a wonderful piece of writing by a poet well schooled in the tools of the trade.