

*Wilderness House Literary Review 2/1*

**On The Line**

By Don Winter  
2006; 14pp; BoneWorld Publishing,  
3700 County Route 24,  
Russell, NY 13684. \$4.

Reviewed By Michael Kriesel

Winter's 1<sup>st</sup> chapbook (also by BoneWorld) had greater depth and range of subject matter. But there are gems here, especially the fast food worker poems. "My first real wage job was at the Niles, MI, Burger Chef," Don said in an online interview. "I had burger production ingrained into me, position by position: food preparer, cashier, even hostess (no joke)...all the way up to night manager. The battle to somehow live a voluntary, purposive life in that kind of world is reflected in those poems."

Winter brings grace to his subjects. Here's the first half of "The Tacoma Tavern:"

is drunk with rain.  
And our tables are careless  
with empty bottles, cigarette ash.  
And we run our fevers  
up over a hundred  
arm wrestling our motorcycle buddies,  
drinking pitchers on one breath  
for a dollar. And we try to drink enough  
to lose our names.  
And we make up stories to fit  
the bad things, by turns hero and victim.  
And the waitress acts vaguely in love  
with each man.

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His other gift is an ability to speak for the ones at the bottom. "us...good for nothings, wrong / since Genesis." Those fucked by "factories everywhere / slamming shut like empty cash drawers."

"I love, and have been influenced by, the poetry of Thomas McGrath," Winter explained. "He was educated, brilliant, and famous, but had the guts to write poems from the position of the working class poor, from that life and that labor being economically exploited, even though the academics hated him for it, and threw him out for it."

Perhaps inspired by McGrath, who's known for his epic "Letter To An Imaginary Friend," Winter tries a longer poem (7 pages) in this chapbook. He's also been recently writing short, haiku-ish pieces. I hope he keeps trying new things. He's one of the best poets in small press...and the one with the most undeveloped potential. His bio notes mention how before a 1998 divorce reduced him to poverty, Winter owned Southeast Real Estate. Worked 16-hour days. Drove 100 mph in his sports car. "Carried a revolver in the front pocket of my leather duster, and lived in a custom-built home on Lake Tuscaloosa."

More recently, he attended college at the University of Anchorage, serving as assistant editor of the Alaska Quarterly. Currently, Don's one of the editors of the zine "Fight These Bastards." And he's back in Michigan, taking care of elderly parents. His mom and dad both have cancer.

Here's hoping Don begins to write about these other lives, somewhere down the line.