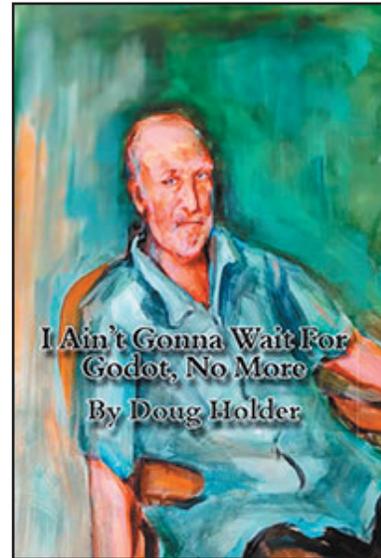


**I Ain't Gonna Wait For Godot, No More**  
by Doug Holder  
Wilderness House Press, 29 Pages  
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*Review by Dennis Daly*

Doug Holder doesn't beat around the bush. His poetry grabs you with its pent-up gusto and bohemian worldview. Maddening at times. Falling-down funny. Sad, beyond troubling. Ravenous. A direct poetic descendant of Ginsberg, Corso, and Huncke, this poet today stands alone in his alternate universe with his off-kilter, gritty observations. In his new collection, *I Aint Gonna Wait For Godot No More*, Holder wanders over the creaking floorboards of his poetic offerings, confronting existential questions and supplying make-do answers. Mortality and meaning lurk between his insistent lines.



The title poem, *I Aint Gonna Wait for Godot No More*, doubles as the opening poem and is the perfect thematic lead-in. The allusion, of course, is to Samuel Beckett's tragicomedy *Waiting For Godot*. "We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?" says Estragon to Vladimir, the other main character in that play. "Yes, yes, we're magicians..." replies Vladimir. With lyrical exasperation and hopeful enthusiasm, Holder suggests a complementary strategy of life building on Beckett's stage reality: art, companionship, bestial attention, management of pain, the love of food, and procrastination. Here is the poet's compressed manifesto,

*I'll be gone...  
I will sport my battered bowler  
I will do a sprightly. Vaudevillian shuffle  
and continue to stumble  
on this earthly floor.  
I will take comfort with friends  
the golden stare of my ginger cat  
a wet lick of a chocolate truffle  
and take my time going  
to that so distant shore...,*

In his poem *Hamlet at the Yiddish Theatre*, Holder draws a bead on Shakespeare's most complex characterization by giving that protagonist Jewish parents. The results are predictable and pretty funny. They – the parents – admonish Hamlet to get real and forewarn him of the comeuppance he's headed for. Holder obviously has some subject-experience in these matters. The poet's concocted parents begin to confront Hamlet here,

## Wilderness House Literary Review 20/3

*"Such tsuris!  
"Enough already!"  
At his dramatic angst  
"You think you  
Had it hard!"  
"To Be or not to Be"  
"If that is the question  
Then make a decision,"  
They say with derision.  
A father,  
might have yelled  
as mine did to me,  
"You'll be a drifter!"  
And, a bit further on, here,  
Some mother  
might have responded  
a maternal cliché  
"You are 30 years old  
you have your  
whole life ahead of you."*

Mortality becomes less of an issue in a world that does not solidify around you. If reality is questionable, as it becomes in Holder's piece entitled *My Computer Wants To "Verify If I Am Human,"* then all boundaries fade, especially the border between life and death. The poet reacts to his computer's abrupt challenge with an ontological meditation. Then, after a Pentecost of sorts, Holder double checks his status,

*Sometimes during  
my dark night  
of the soul  
I wonder  
if I am embodied  
or an ethereal ghost  
But the morning light  
Streams in my faith  
From the bedroom window  
yet again.  
The computer has  
a nefarious rotating circle  
that surrounds my visual plane...  
I check my pulse  
I feel the flesh and blood,  
the flashing synapses  
of my brain,  
the crooked life lines  
that are traced on my hands.*

Tragic Cardigan, Holder's ode to the invisibility of old age, questions not the fact of senescence, but humanity's resistance to it. The poet uses his grandfather's comfortable sweater (named after British general Lord Cardigan, who led the charge of the Light Brigade during the Crimean War and who expelled his Irish tenants into the tender mercies of nature's

## Wilderness House Literary Review 20/3

wrath – just saying) as a jacket-like refuge from worldly discomfort. His self-evaluation follows a daily routine,

*You are febrile  
In your frumpiness.  
You try to muffle  
The invective  
In your head,  
"Old Man – shake a leg!"  
And you would  
If it wasn't so  
Painful.  
Now put enough pens –  
Perhaps a pipe or two  
The overdue phone bill  
Gnarled pencils in its  
Deep, sagging pockets  
Perhaps sip a well-timed  
Scotch  
And disappear*

Counterculture attitudes and artistic sympathies often derive their impetus from family dynamics. The "beat" perspective exhibits this propensity in spades. Holder's wonderfully revelatory piece, *My Father with Jack Dempsey*, catches his dad's business relationship with the world's heavyweight boxing champion and iconic celebrity of his day and freezes it in the form of a photo. The elder Holder was one of the legendary advertising madmen operating out of New York. The poet details one relationship of a PR man and client that leads to another relationship of father and son in these lines,

*Dad's narrow black tie  
his jet black hair  
tamed by an oil slick of Vitalis  
his left hand clenched in a fist  
a pugilist meeting another pugilist.  
Dempsey pretends to yell something in my dad's ear  
Like Ali to Cosell, a graceful athlete  
To the Jewish Ed Sullivan posture of my PR man father.  
My father did not seem to be living in the moment  
He was always not here and nowhere.*

On the contrary, Holder's poetry, expressive and down-to-earth, is always here, always rooted in his askew stagecraft and always accessible in the most absurd way. Like Beckett's Estragon, Holder agrees to go, puts on his hat, and then sits and waits with the rest of us.

For more info about Dennis Daly go to: <https://dennisfdaly.blogspot.com/>