
Street Signs brings together a diverse group of writers, poets, spoken word artists and individuals with something to say about a place they call home. This is an opportunity to sample their creative expressions and critical opinions of Worcester, MA in one publication.

Frank Caricchio Paul William Gagnon Elliot
Maldonado John Flynn Bill MacMillan Deb
Ellstrom Joseph P. Fusco Jr. Carle A. Johnson
Ken McQuillan Paul Szlosek Corrina Bain Alixa
Mike Duffy John Eisner Todd Deal Sherman
Michel Duncan Merle Tony Brown Francis
Woodbridge, Jr. Lynne G. Redan Lynn
Anderson Chris Mellen Stacy Serwecki Joel
Moore Michael J. Jackman David Nader Mike
Mason Tom Ewart



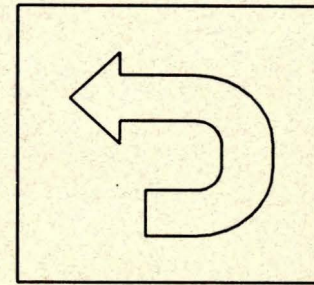
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STREET SIGNS: a worcester anthology D NADER BatCity Press

STREET SIGNS



A WORCESTER
ANTHOLOGY

Compiled by David Nader

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**BatCity Press
Worcester, MA**

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Street Signs: a worcester anthology

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I am indebted to the generosity of the Worcester writers who contributed to this anthology.

The Anthology itself is an impetus to publish local writers using BatCity Press as a vehicle. We are repeatedly approached to publish books by authors who find it difficult to put out their own works because of the strictures of the market place and its methods of distribution. In an effort to give exposure to local artists who are often too 'outside' for traditional media, yet merit attention, we will continue in the tradition of independent small press publishers by offering the opportunity to produce quality publications and circumvent cumbersome processes.

David Nader

BatCity Press

Introduction

Worcester is an interesting place with interesting people and situations. This is true of the past and the present. Its history of inventions, important historical events, and people is well chronicled. What is often omitted are the opinions, reflections and judgements of its inhabitants. When they are solicited they are often treated as curiosities or entertainment. This anthology treats them as important factors to be considered as indicative of what is going on in this place people call home.

The collection is loosely divided into three sections. The first section concerns itself with the opinions or critiques of the social-cultural landscape. The second is more the personal reflections of individuals from this place, but not necessarily referring to the place itself. In the last section the pieces are about Worcester and/or the authors' experiences in this place. These categories are elastic.

The writers are known and not so well known people who live here or have spent an important part of their life here. Some are writers, spoken word artists, poets, and individuals with something to say. It is by no means all inclusive or statistically representative. I'm not sure if that is possible. It is possible to ask people around you to express themselves and take their musings seriously and respectfully no matter how far they veer from what is mirrored in the dominant forms of the mass media.

It has been my experience that what makes a place unique is very often the diversity of its people. Worcester is and has been characterized as a place of diversity on many levels.

What I find interesting is that when people express themselves freely without too many constrictions, two areas of interest emerge. They share the stage conspicuously. Both their differences and similarities become apparent.

The authors were asked in the most general terms to write about Worcester. I did not care if they expressed opinions, stories, or feelings, as long as they experienced them here. I tried to present the project in the loosest way possible. It was often easy because some of the people involved already had these types of pieces in their body of works.

Most important to me was the lack of editing on my part. I compiled the work and published it as given to me. Except for glaring typos I exercise no literary censorship. I wanted those with something to say to be heard. Some of the writing is clearly "outside". I leave the style of defacto control to the "petite bourgeois clerics" who do their job fairly well. If the craft of excellence is the only way one is able to nourish his or her mind, there are a myriad of sources for those vehicles. There is no absence of well crafted work here, but that does not serve as a prerequisite for their inclusion.

The book concludes with a section of biographical sketches about the authors. These were for the most part entered as the authors submitted them, rather

than codifying them into a homogenized format. I find these expressions to be as important as the submissions. How people present themselves is informative in itself.

This project ended up being educational as well as a source of joy for me. It was an opportunity to sample many of the writers known to the area and those individuals who do not receive any exposure for their expressions. I hope you are more than amused.

David Nader
September 27, 2000

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Preface

Street Signs is a eulogy for Worcester. It turned out to be elegiac not by design but as an organic response to a call to write about this place some call home. The authors lament a city which has become a memory. They wax nostalgic with melancholy expressions and celebrations of beauty's decay. The city is showered with left handed compliments. It is easy to get the idea that you do not have to 'get out of Worcester' because it no longer exists.

The anthology begins with Frank Caricchio's piece informing us of an apocalyptic urban landscape whose hope lies in a Darwinian Passover. We are the *Animal in the Road*. Both John Flynn and Bill MacMillan demonstrate a reverence for what was and what is, while Nuyorican poet Eliot Maldonado pays homage to the city's wordsmiths. The diversity and uniqueness of Worcester's citizenry is sweetly chronicled with implicit warnings from Deb Ellstrom, Stacy Serwecki, and Vox Poetica Editor, Lynn Anderson. This sensibility is taken one step further with the transcendental naturalness of Chris Mellen's *So Old and Young* and Michel Duncan Merle's most surreal *Bud*. It becomes difficult to decide if the angel of death harks from the darkness or the light. Even Worcester Poetry Association's Carle A. Johnson opts to seek refuge in the workplace fearing the city's springtime rebirth may be transitory.

These fears like all paranoia are founded in bits of fact. The authors repeatedly paint pictures of a Gothic Gotham not unfamiliar to the observant.

Tony Brown's benign sarcasm is a stern warning whereas Francis Woodbridge's *Hour of the Wolf* is a blatant attack on those 'idols which beset mens' minds'. Corrina Bain begs the question as God's Lieutenants end up as corrupted denizens of a bleak wasteland while Lynne G. Redan stays firmly footed in the existential reality of feminine complacency. But who offers the redemption of overcoming our situation?

Mike Duffy writes a ballad to the well balanced trade offs of the construction site. Paul Gagnon reminisces using the images of his youth as *The Bad Nurse* suggests a radical humanism. Using forgotten history *Hurry Up, Please, Its Time* and *Congress Alley* are reminders of grassroots efforts to culturally revitalize the city with its own identity rather than creating one from the top down. Joe Fusco Jr. writes the whole thing off as a bad joke and Tom Ewart good naturedly accepts the city's transgressions as signs of misguided caring. Paul Szlosek wonders about the virtues of self expression. Todd Deal covers the waterfront. Alixa goes way inside. Mason's *Houseman* personally experiences what the citizens undergo as he gets unknowingly hustled from an outsider only to find it out when his pockets have been emptied. Unlike the city, Mike regroups and takes back what is his and then some. Ken McQuillan reaches out for hope but grows tired as its people continue to sleepwalk.

Worcester has become something else. It will continue to mutate. They call it Metro West. What was is gone. Michael Jackman says, "Let her go! God bless her!" R.I.P. Onward and Upward.

Street Signs is made up of a variety of literary forms: 'outside', traditional, and pedestrian. What is important is that they exhibit a pattern of opinion and take on a meaning, if not a metaphoric meaning in the context of this pattern. Simple as individual pieces but more complex as a conceptual whole. As you read, look both ways.

*Imagine whatever you will but know that it is not
imagination but experience which makes poetry,
and that behind every image,
behind every word there is something
I am trying to tell you,
something that really happened*

Ira Cohen From *Imagine* Jean Cocteau

ANIMAL IN THE ROAD**Frank Caricchio**

There was an animal in the road so I slowed down in order not to hit it. I was not sure whether or not the cars behind me would see it. I drove slowly to the curb and watched from there as the animal stopped to investigate a piece of fruit in the road. He was very careful of cars and of people. I wondered what price he paid to learn this caution. He appeared to be a beaver. I was surprised to see one in the city although it was close to the Blackstone River.

I wonder then about our own survival skills as I look around and see babies wheeling babies in strollers, sometimes with another on the hip. Childhood to parenthood in a few short years. A fast forward generation moving along hot city streets where stop signs are ignored and drivers avoid eye contact with pedestrians to deny they exist or lose the right of way. Picking up the paper we read about children shooting children over territory bearing buildings that no one really wants anymore. Buildings insured to the hilt, only waiting for Dante's lottery of flame, while absentee landlords fiddle in the background waiting to collect.

Sometimes it's hard to remember that our youngsters are not gangsters, and an ice cream is as tasty to them as it is to other children in other parts of the world. And maybe given the chance of a smile

and honest courtesy often enough, they might be inclined to do likewise instead of hiding in a false adulthood, the place to go when your childhood is taken away so early in life.

People seem so hard. Sometimes you wonder if the world will ever know the joys of peace or the tranquility of silence as busses and trucks thunder by and car radios blast confusingly down the road, broken only by the air conditioned land yachts with culture-class diverted tinted windows, buffers against the hard reality of life. I wonder where we will be in a hundred years.

In the short time I've considered this I notice in the mirror the beaver picked up the fruit, carried it back to the sidewalk with the caution born of the instinct of survival. He takes a taste of the fruit, seems to nod OK then scoots back in the woods by the railroad tracks and river.

As I drive away I again wonder, who wins or loses in this world. And as I think of that beaver I feel a lot more hope for all of us.

SUNDAY FADES TO MONDAY

The gypsy vampires
glide thru the night
Sneaker clad, pantyless,
condoms clutched so tight

In hands that long for glass plungers
with semi-poison fangs
Their eyes dart like lasers
Their minds are set to a plan

“Hey baby you need a date
I’ll make you feel so good”
They just need to get it over
They only wish they could

Undercover drive-bys slide by
on their four wheel couch
Shifty eyed 20 miles per hour
On each door they tired, slouch

They look at the girls on corners
think’n if they screw up, They’ll take’m in
Or maybe if it gets too cold
either way They win

Then the winter night is shattered
by the thunder of my ride
Two wheel Black Stallion
Headlight glows with pride

Cutting cold winter air
It’s object is just in site
A warm seat, a cold beer
in Scarlet’s neon light

A few brave brothers drive by
Destination unknown
Maybe in a hurry to get somewhere

or sense that I want to be alone

As they fade away leaving echoes
of their lonely song
I feel the need to be out there
on the road where I belong

Watching the vampires on the sidewalk
the cops inside their cage
The homeless get creative
and the drunks go into rage

As Sunday fades to Monday
the shadows seem to change
I know tomorrow night when I ride out
it will start all over again

HUB**Paul William Gagnon**

as a child, I remember visiting Worcester startled at
the regular density of homes the four-deckers stacked

like cards attached to each the square spirals of
clothesline apparatus like umbrellas for skeletons
and

beneath all of it as if the throats of bees singing
some song they sang so long they forgot the notes
and

their voices and so it just came out unthought like
walking or pressing buttons on great machines-- a

humming not quite an ohhhmm but more ragged
filled
with squawks and spikes and low resonances of
bodies

heaving together in communal warmth hot as
blacktop
and it amazed me how in my small suburbia the hum
was

dim even on the days when the great Whitin Machine
Works opened its riveted gates and the gray garbed

grease handed fathers pinged and panged with

presses
and hammers setting up their own little satellite

hives and on some days-- Sunday especially-- the
hum
stopped altogether and you could hear the birds

singing in the branches of elms the cicada's long
rasping voice blazing endlessly the cricket's steady

pith vibrating and behind the house there were
woods
with deep pines that did nothing but whisper and

whisper you could go there and be silent and know
what
silence and aloneness are --even get a taste of

laziness, if you could admit it-- but the city is not
lazy even the bums migrate back and forth from soup

kitchen to street corner flat plate of the palm
out--"hey kid, spare a quarter? thanks, you just
saved my life!"

and downtown in the sparkling center of all things
there are glass towers that do nothing but reflect

motion there are stone structures bulging with
purpose
inside them the relentless tick of typewriters stenos

the bee voices of printing machines tearing into the
early morning hours stomping flat ephemeral black

script like ants on white tablecloth and this was
oh so overwhelming to me sheltered boy of the
suburbs

and so I sought out stillness as if to deny that some
thing could be lubricated so well as to force

perpetual motion and seeking my eyes latched onto
the
brownfields the poison wastelands fenced in

diddling with blowing litter lifeless silent and
nearby the belching toil of the Blackstone bubbling

with the runoff of a million invisible leaky roads a
river jaundiced with the piss of this great machine

descending on the noiseless ocean depths quietly
unnoticed
like spent grease trickling from a leaky hub and

it was then I knew that nothing was safe from the
city's grinding voice.

in this place

Elliot Maldonado

in this
place

voices

a wormhole drifts
licked
like psyche

of we

humans

residents and breathers
consumers

humans

given option
to be

whatever
the options

are

not
determined by

we

mystics
riders of the wormhole

onto your page
onto your brain

**WHAT I KNOWS BEST IS THE KENMORE
DINAH AT 3:30 A.M.**

John Flynn

Then comes the moment when I feels I could be inventing. I re-arranges the furniture and this attack of helplessness begins to fade. I sits and like you I hears what I chooses tah from steady percussive syncopations of Grafton Hill and Vernon Hill and Kelly Square at the end of the world. The frontier, truth, is still our first and last mission.

I sits in darkness, my cigarette like a curious evil eye that observes my lamenting this paralysis--the kid in me won't talk, won't whisper, he's scratching for sudden dark responses to darkness. What can bridge, and why it fails. Worrying armageddon in an ecumenical spirit.

I hears a deafening melange, songs of waffles and a heartbreak cream, 290 milked in moonlight, the hairline crack in my windshield. I is not one of them, you know, the Neighborly Sort. I only dresses like it, bullet-proof patriot in flak and goggles at the lathe. Feeding obsessions, dispassionate toward commitment. The last one to bawl over the changes they made at *Spag's*. Hey, I gotta right-tah bawl. I know this. I'll see you at the *Emerald Isle* and we'll tilt a few and talk about it. Hit the *Harding* latah, and maybe the *Irish House* and pahtee in the *Lamplightah* until we close the freakin' place.

Balanced on a 2 by 4 rolling over a *Coke* bottle, sideways, I twisted mattress springs 80 years

with my teeth. I knew Cousy's mothah. Just you try that in your best of times.

MULCAHEYS PUB UNDER THE MERIT GAS STATION SIGN

Millbury Street was a canal once, you know.
and White City an amusement park.
Bet you boys didn't know that.

I can still hear white-haired Buster Sherry
spanking a basketball
braggin' about Jack "The Shot" Foley
had the best shot he'd evah seen.

What's gone?
Well, a lotta things.
Two words come to mind: manufacturing jobs.
The basement pool hall in Webster Square is gone.
The *Webster House* is still there
hell, it's all still there, in a way
except for the Big Boy statue
and that musty pool hall
in that dark basement
with all those trimmed *Brunswick* tables.
I healed in that place, so many nights.

I can still hear my Dad lamenting the fall
of *Denholm's*, and *Thom McCann's*.
I guess every main street
is never as good as it used to be.

**THE KING OF HIGHLAND SLUMMING FOR
WHAT'S WANTED**

wobbles up alone from elm park
past *al bum*'s, the *boynton*
and all those 4 a.m. mudslides at at the *acapulco*
wanting to know it remains safe and unsafe here
wanting discovery for what's in the now
and to sing of omniversal joy
translubuent acidjazzriffing sonnets
for greatness in people
peace on earth and glorious achievement

main south**Bill MacMillan**

the city pops & pulsates
to the beat of a thousand shoes
walkin' down dirty side streets
salsa hum
& the om
of tires on pavement
a mantra of machines
muscle
& movement
a city of immigrants
still on the move
lookin' for home in back ally clubs
shop counters
& brownstone stoops
still lookin' for home
in the faces outside the windows that need washing
& the pulse
of the people
is a tide
rising with the moon
it's nocturnal
it's lunar
& the stars come on like streetlights
it's the baseboom outside the door
it's the alarm singing falsetto fear
to a world that could care less
it's the baby

that even the corner boys
stop & smile at
& a thousand shoes
slap the street
lay the base for the buildings tellin' stories
for the sirens' song of streetmamas
for every heart
lookin' for home
lookin' for life
lookin' for salvation
on the other side
of pleasant street.

junction of 146/290
(aka: sunday 6:00am)

for all it's cliché & overuse
this city does sleep
rests despite the rising sun
she turns a reluctant shoulder to dawn
pulls at the cover of shadow
searches for the snooze button
early risers
full of ambition & carpe diem
venture out onto the streets
fail to wait at lights
avoid nonexistent traffic jams
sail through the crossroads

countertop priests yawn
at silver coffee urns, pray for patience
hope to practice what they preach
this is the moment of epics
poets should be able to create
retirement funds from mornings like these
instead, we ignore the miracle
of light emerging from the dark
focus instead on the mundane
hope to express the mix of wonder & sadness
through idle cabs & street sweepers
look to the past for inspiration
but the best of kerouac & corso
becomes nothing more than flash paper & bongos
context is everything in translation
purest charge, purest lament chose
the more things change
the more lost we become
morning is always a woman
always a lover
& always left wanting more.

**RIOT IN MAIN SOUTH:
An Eyewitness Account**

Deb Ellstrom

In August of 1999, the Worcester Telegram & Gazette reported that there had been a melee at the corner of Main Street and Hammond Street after the closing of the annual Latin American weekend festival in back of City Hall. The report stated that, at 8:30 that night, a double line of riot-helmeted police marched down Main Street and ordered the cars and bystanders to leave the area. I was in that intersection at 8:20 pm; this is what I saw.

That Sunday night,
we saw Pride on Main Street
Latin Pride
in Main South
at the ending of the Latin Festival

Pride
in that section of town
where pride is so seldom seen

pride
that even the cops and their bubble-tops--
that riot gear
and the double-deep phalanx--
couldn't smother
pride

Horns blaring "*PRIDE!*"
 Flags whispering "*PRIDE!*"
 in the breeze of the passing of the cars

"Viva Puerto Rico"
 in uneven whitewash letters
 on the back window of an old van
 the colors of beach sand and wave-froth
 at high noon

The man the color of cafe-au-lait
 strides the sidewalk
 towards the Aurora
 waving both arms
 every few steps
 turns and shouts
 "Boricua! Puerto Rico!"
 Car horns up and down the street
 answer.
 he pumps his fist
 throws his head back to laugh
 walks on

Across from the Tropigale Nite Club
 whole families gather
 on the sidewalk
 in front of the Iglesia Pentecolstale - Roca de
 Salvacion
 an abuela in a folding chair
 holds a nino on her lap with her right hand
 steadies a flagpole with her left
 it is taller than the "No Parking" sign
 beside her

the blue triangle and white star
on stripes
ripples
as more cars pass

passengers hang out the windows
yelling
spectators on the sidewalk
cheering

clusters of three- and four-year olds
run toward the streets,
waving their own child-sized standards
Mothers run after, catch their breaths, laugh
Groups of older girls giggle, narrow their eyes
point to cars

"Oohhh, look at THAT one!"

"No, no! The one in the Camaro!"

"He's so CUTE!"

Someone starts singing "¡Que Bonita Bandera!"
as another car passes,
its hood draped with a six-foot flag
the singer is lost amidst the song of horns
and cheers

and even the hookers look up
and young gruff faces break into smiles
before turning back to business

a blue-and-white
bawls out a warning
pulls over another van
in the slow-to-stop traffic

there is nowhere to go
in this gridlock
naught to do but
watch the cars pass
and hear the horns sing
"PRIDE!"
along Main South
"PRIDE!" in this neighborhood
"PRIDE!"
pride.

THE CITY'S TREE**Joseph P. Fusco, Jr.**May '92

The house we've bought has a large city tree by the curb.

Its branches provide shade for the street and the front of our new home.

It's bark is jaundice in spots, mushrooms abound on its mid-section, sumac sprouts from its trunk.

It seems strong and impervious.

During a mild thunder-storm, a branch falls off and dents the top of my brother's company car.

"I bring you a house-gift and your tree hits my car!" he blurts.

"What tree?" I reply.

October '94

The roots of the city infiltrate our home, causing sinks and toilets to chronically back up.

The roots have also transformed the front sidewalk into a Salvador Dali painting - jagged pieces of pavement jutting up without purpose.

Our plumber tells us to use "Roots No More" quarterly.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) makes note of the sidewalk metamorphosis and promises to react.

April '96

Once again, my son has poison sumac.

The DPW fixes the sidewalk.

I tell one worker that, when it rains, branches
compete to hit the ground first.

He smiles.

May '98

A mini-tornado hovers above our home,
Kansas - style.

Around midnight, the city tree surrenders a
monstrous limb that falls on the power lines
connecting out house to the pole across the street,
lowering them to about six-feet off the ground.

Electric and telephone stay on but we lose
cable, god-damn it!

Live wires hover over the street and our
driveway, waiting for a suicidal Wallenda.

Cars drive slowly underneath the carnage like
reluctant limbo dancers.

Twenty six hours later, the DPW removes the
limb, I bitch that their tree's been a problem for six
years.

"You can complain for another fifty years," a
worker smiles. "Nothing will happen."

May 2048

Every disease has been cured except poison
sumac and dementia.

The city tree is as yellow as the sun. Weekly,

medical students from U Mass collect its mushrooms which now cure prostrate cancer. Six limbs remain.

My wife, a very spry 89, looks out from the bars of our front window.

“Look, honey, they’ve sent a DPW robot to remove the tree,” she whispers into my digitally-enhanced hearing-aid.

I scratch at the sumac-rash on my calf.

“What tree?” I reply.

YOU WON'T BELIEVE THIS Carle A. Johnson

Worcester is so dirty, so gritty,
from winter street sanding,
everything gathers dull in drains and gutters.
Walls of falling buildings stand mute
harlequins of loose wallpaper,
stairs that go down to work
every weekday morning, becoming
harder and harder to descend.

You won't believe this,
but this morning through my car window
Worcester looks like a slick
travel magazine advertisement
that I'm suddenly driving through.
Worcester is clean, bright,
and beautiful - just May gorgeous
everywhere! At every glance I see clear,
hard-focused, exquisite Nature -
forsythia golden, tree blossoms pink,
sunlight sparkles like electricity
from Salisbury Pond in Institute
Park, every brick of the Antiquarian
Society is new minted, the sky
reaches blue all the way to glory...

Looking out the car window,
I can't believe what I see - or what
I hear... You won't believe

what I just heard on the car radio -
the Red Sox' winning streak continues.
Man, after a few minutes
of this joy, I rush to work
afraid someone is going to
change the channel!

WORCESTER

Ken McQuillan

I will call this fresh ink, until tomorrow when it dries,
And this page is turned, locking my words in their place,
But have the waking man's words gone unnoticed,
And erected the terms under which a violent rap is required,
Striking me out of laborious dreams of unperceived futility,
Telling me one more time to face the wall and assume the position,
Tying my hands behind my back and shuffling me off to someplace they'd rather I be,
To a place where I can do no more damage,
Somehow these words light the damp soul of this city aflame
Defiance, Dissidence and Revolution
Selectively choosing not to decipher their meanings,
But the waking man swings his cane indiscriminately,
And those struck square between the eyes sit idly
Angry, but still lambs to the systematic slaughter,
Praying for a shepherd to emerge
From the ashes of a city that they once thought possible,
Will she walk through the flames, her feet sinking into the embers,
Unscarred and undaunted at the sights that she's seen
And as each one rises I stay close to the waking man,

Avoiding the attacking cane,
And feeding off his hope that this will be the one,
But I grow tired and I worry as Worcester sleeps.

POET OR STRIPPER**Paul Szlosek**

If I ever have a seventeen year old daughter,
(I admit the possibility is becoming quite remote)
and one morning, as we are chowing down together
on Pop Tarts and Coca Cola, she tells me
she can't decide on a career,
wavering between poet and stripper,
I would advise her to choose the latter.

Now, not even considering economics,
and I've heard a good stripper can pull down
a couple thousand a week, but as a poet,
she be lucky to see half that in her lifetime,
stripping is obviously the much more moral,
much less degrading profession.
All you have to expose is skin.
And the audiences are always so enthusiastic
and responsive,
filled with respected members of the community like
Businessmen and Politicians.

But as a poet, you perform
in sleazy run-down dives,
reeking of ammaretto and hazelnut
and cater to the whims of all those underground,
on the fringe, alternative lifestyle types.
You know who I mean:
Environmentalists,
Liberal Thinkers,

and the like.

And they are usually so indifferent
to the poor slob on stage.

You practically gotta beg them on hands and knees
for them to listen,

to pay attention at all,

and if they do,

they are never satisfied.

They keep demanding

“Take it off!

Take it all off,

the pretenses,

the false facades,

the masks you wear in public.”

And you oblige, teasingly peeling away

all the layers, one by one

until your soul is laid bare,

your essence revealed

and you're left standing there

with your psyche hanging out

for a roomful of strangers to gawk at.

Well, if you ask me,

you gotta be an attention-craving fool

with no self respect to wanna do

a humiliating thing like that.

RED BARON

Alixa

I am breaking the stones of my back like my father's
remains on a Sunday morning

I am stripping scars off the palms of my hands
because I know the backbone of God is a hard cover
binding

I am releasing all hatred you have towards my people
take it back I don't want it dripping down with the
red blood of striped stars pinned up outside buildings
revolting the revolver from my hand,

I got the BANG that brings me back to building walls
their building halls with the raw tears, the fears of a
man aren't small because a microscope is all that's
conjured up

raw knees are just the titling

there's no deceiving congress, you got the fair up his
hair when he starts combing it down

you got this spinning like a record, two tracks to fast
and the middle man don't know who to catch up to, so
I'm divided between two countries

and it comes down to how I'm walking, but a ma'
talking with a hallelujah in my tempo

They say it ain't enough so they wanna know what
kind of light I'm buying and who I'm buying into and
nothings white enough for the masses, Spanish
enough for my grandma (and i find myself swimming
in open territory)

or do I dot my i's well I thought I was capital
with the base threaded lines sowing their faces to an
unconscious I'm well aware of

burn with desire
paint with the tip of their tongues on stretched
canvases held tight by separate hands
I want the artist to cumm all over their thoughts in
ecstasy and bring me back my bones

Bring me back my bones

bring me back your hatred, I will break it, I don't
want it, take it back, on my back I got the spine of a
man not a human all consuming,
Goddamn, all consuming, in my fire

SUPPERTIME**John Eisner**

The restaurant chain holding the monopoly
on fast food in the dog-eat-dog world
announced it will remain open
twenty-four hours a day. Now

a hungry hound can get french fried
chihuahuas on full moon nights when sleep
evades even the most true of snouts.

“Yo quiero” indeed. Small, medium
or large chihuahuas, señor?

The big dogs run
the dog-eat-dog world. They trot in
in their diamond-studded collars
and feed their pups—crunchy, dry
for the young, mushy and wet
for the newly weaned, fresh flesh
for those with teeth sharp enough
and mandibular muscles strong enough
to rip fur, fascia and muscles.

Sorry, hydrants are for patrons only.

Rumors that horse and kangaroo meat
have appeared in the Styrofoam to-go bowls
are denied ferociously and are declared
to be rumors spread by those who would hump

the leg of the system. And it's the best system there is. Just ask the cats.

The mid-sized dogs, too small to reign
 but big enough to fend off being eaten,
 gnaw on discarded bones and watch the lights
 of the restaurants burn brightly
 through the night
 in canine black and white.

NOTHING BUT A LOT

There's no one in the box office to collect \$ 5 per carload of just me and hand me back a torn-in-half ticket stub. Only the O's of CLOSED FOR SEASON cling to the rusting streetside sign. No condominiums ever grew here, the rumored reason for the drive-in never re-opening to show cartoons between features showcasing sweet, salty, greasy treats in the concession bunker and how many minutes till SHOWTIME. It's just as well. I couldn't handle a double feature today. The car would overflow with memories of steamy dates and raucous nights with buddies complete with a forest green Coleman camping cooler crammed with a \$ 2 case of Fort Schuyler beer and six pack of Molson Canadian for the first tongue-numbing round. There used to be a squealingly fun playground here. There used to be a screen taller than city hall. By this time next month this summer, too, will be empty as a

sprocket hole. Now I drive away, careful not to scrape against the stubble of the speakerless speaker posts that stand like nails in the cracking blacktop coffin, waiting for the hammer of progress to strike.

WORCESTER COUNTY MADRIGALS**Todd Deal Sherman****RUST AND RAY-O-SHINE**

I often think of you thinking about me
When I'm in some abandoned industrial park with
rails no longer run
And broken factory windows on a grey sky day.
The grass is overgrown.
A worn out tire here and ivy crawling crumbling
brick walls-
I'm pale and thin inside my coat.
Shades of olive and umber surround.

I walk across a closed off bridge, it has collapsed on
the other side,
To more buildings and debris...
Crushed glass, tarpaper rolls and rotting carnival
trailers.
Hoping to find some newspaper from the forties
tucked away in the glovebox of a rusting Packard.
Magic discovery when we found that old can of Ray-
O-Shine amidst cobwebs and pine needles at the auto
graveyard.

Sitting on an oil drum rubbing anomomous weed in
my palm-
It smells like everything I've been looking at.
Growing up in battery acid soil.

A billowing smokestack, concrete giraffe scorching
the sky.

This once churning textile town now a deserted
construction site littered with oxide skeletal broken
promise reminders.

This is a wilderness.

Mother Nature's red headed stepchild.

I feel peace out here.

I think of you again thinking about me...

Can you see me over here in the scrap metal yard by
the coke and ore silos?

The sun sets behind three fat crows and corrugated
steel.

CALLOUS HEART TISSUES

Please little scratch ticket, take me away from here-
But no, I will send you along to the carcasses of your
dead brothers and sisters stuck to a hurricane fence
and merrily down the stream to clog another dream.
Float down the gutter past the empty bottles of
Night Train, this is South Main.

She's all grey with bits of green...

Liquor stores and churches, laundermats and grinder
shops

Traffic lights and rotaries,

A place to sow your last wild oat.

Same old town crumble and burning down, a
Worcester phoenix nearly yearly.

Northeastern coast where you inherit the Holy Ghost
and you wear out your shoes walking on the skin of
the Heart of the Common wealth.

I'm not sentenced to the taverns anymore, though
still I long for their muddy embrace.

I'm not in love with that girl anymore though at
times I miss her company.

No matter how wasteful these scenes may be...

Still I missed their company.

Memories of the highway and unknown coves at
night...

Slowly, gently paralyzed in their delights...I wander.

Oh my adopted family of gypsy entertainers.

Mom and Pop put on the show and ply the villagers
with strong spirit.

FLURRY

She sure is pretty now,

Stretching out for me as far as I can see -

Rolling down that line,

Another broken chunk of land gone all divine on me..

She sure is pretty now, ain't she?

It's funny how she can still do it to me after all this
time.

Day in day out and then new colors that I find.

Walking down the back way

In the college library

Up on Green Hill Park

Stumbling home on Grafton Street

She can still show that side to me.
Once the pavement cools and the four winds blow
over seven hills...
After all the leaves are down and you break out the
thermals for winter chills,
You can hear the town slow down when they bring it
all inside
And leave only lights and puffs of smoke on the
outside.
Twinkle like a Christmas tree -
She sure is pretty now, ain't she?
Bumping along the snowed in roads to a warm place
(the heater don't work too good)
Through the fog of your breath a moonlit angel face
with rouge
Never been out of state, in her Worcester County
solitude.

BUD**Michel Duncan Merle**

He didn't know how old he was...maybe forty, maybe more. He'd lost count one day at a deserted rest stop on Route 122. He'd forgotten his name too, but that had been easy to remedy: he'd stepped on a crushed beer can and he now was 'Bud.' Funny! Annie asked, "Bud, is that for real?" And he'd answered with an annoyed shrug meant to conceal the truth.

So, Bud led a somewhat normal life following his amnesia. His carpentry skills were intact, his athletic aptitude considerable, and so he blended right in, joining a building crew on the outskirts of Paxton. "Damn near built one of those contemporary colonials single-handed." he'd boast.

At night, Bud would drive to the airport to watch the turbo-props land and take off. One evening, Bud had a conversation with another guy named Bud. "Bud," Bud said, "have you ever noticed that these planes all seem to be overshooting the runway?" Bud thought about it and observed that, no, he'd never noticed because he shut his eyes when they came in.

"That's very funny," Bud said, scrunching his eyes shut as he laughed.

Bud couldn't remember what the other Bud looked like. A crazy thought came to him that maybe the

other Bud was his real self, or at least someone who was a great deal closer to what he really was than he was. Bud said to him in a dream, "Wait a minute, Bud I'm the one whose memory is gone, remember?" Bud couldn't remember a thing about it and it bothered him later as he ate breakfast at Annie's Diner. He went to work like he normally did, all the time trying to remember what Bud looked like.

Then, it came to him, as he scrambled up a thirty-foot aluminum ladder, that he'd never really looked at that guy at the airport. Never bothered to, he guessed, because he'd been concentrating on his voice: "Bud," the other Bud had said, "what are you doing up here tonight? Today's Wednesday and nothing comes in except a few private planes on Wednesday." Bud's voice was gravelly, the voice of a boozier, maybe; the voice of someone from his past?: In any case, Bud was too polite to ask him anything personal. Bud said, though, "Bud, why don't you get down from that ladder? Ladders and airports don't mix."

The next day, when a plane crashed into the housing development, Bud was working in the basement, installing a temporary staircase. At first he thought it was a bomb or a meteor: it was a frantic, drunken scream. A scream much like the one that was ripping his face open. Bud never returned to work after that, preferring to draw disability checks for his limp. He continued to drive over to the airport every night. Annie took pity on him and let him stay in the room above the storage shed.

“What are you doing here now?” The other Bud was asking him. Bud didn’t look up but, recognizing that voice, managed to sneak a look!: a big surprise because Bud’s face was something he’d seen in a photograph of the 1926 class of Natick High School that hung at Annie’s Diner. “You can’t be as old as that!” Bud said, scrunching his eyes shut because he’d just heard a plane approaching. That plane did not crash but did scream a frantic, drunken scream.

Bud now spent the daylight hours at the airport listening for that distinctive scream. He’d sit on the tailgate of his truck talking to Bud, drinking a few himself. Bud talked about the old days gone by, when he flew the old DK-55’s from Worcester to Manchester twice a day. “Airmail was a big thing back then!” Bud asked him about the class picture at Annie’s. Bud admitted he knew the guy: “There’s a family resemblance because that was my father Bud; he’s also Annie’s dad—she’s my half-sister.”

Annie was smiling at Bud. He always asked for whatever the daily special was. Bud was perched on his stool buttering his bread. Bud, looking down from the picture, wearing his football sweater, his hair neatly parted in the middle, was in one of his thoughtful moods. He was faintly hungry, as often happened when Annie prepared his favorite stuffed bell peppers (in his day, they charged 65 cents).

Meanwhile, at that deserted rest stop, a fourth man named Bud was standing alone, starting to forget and beginning to worry. A turbo-prop screamed in

the distance. Bud shut his eyes for a moment and started to walk in the direction of the scream. Down the road about a mile, Annie's neon sign beckoned. Bud didn't remember his name; tired and hungry, he waited for Annie to come over. Annie asked him, "What'll you have, Bud?"

Bud decided that this was a good enough name, and he answered to Bud after that. Bud could not remember much, just that he'd found himself, alone and on foot, at that deserted rest stop on Route 122.

Bud had no known occupation, but he had a real talent for playing pinball. He fell into it easily because Annie's had an old machine in the back by the pay phone (it featured some vintage P-51 fighter planes). Soon enough, Annie's patrons would agree to play against Bud for a few bucks. Bud ate his meals Annie's and slept in a broken down VW bus half sunken in the brambles behind the shed. Bud made his first trip to the airport in Bud's pick-up. They spent a couple of hours looking at the planes land and take off. Bud didn't know why he'd gone with Bud in the first place, but it was something he wanted to do again the next night. "Hey, Bud!" the man in the camper called out, "Who's your friend?....Bud?....Hi Bud. Bud, did you see that?" Bud had seen it, the turbo-prop taking off with its characteristic scream in the fog. "Yeah," Bud answered, "it just disappeared, well, disappeared just like that." And Bud, clearing his throat, or maybe sobbing, mumbled from his perch on the roof of the camper, "There's nothing like it - nothing in the

world.” He scrambled down and walked over to them, “I’d build myself a house right here if they’d let me – sit on the porch, watch the planes all day and night.” Bud agreed, “I’ll help you build it.” “Bud added, “I’ll keep you guys company.”

And so they agreed to set about building that house: there, a short distance from the runway on a sliver of land that had been overlooked by developers. The house they built was long and narrow with a row of windows facing the airport and a long porch with no railing. The driveway stretched in front along a gradual arch, and a patch of grass bordered the road: altogether a fine imitation of a rest stop.

It was here that Annie moved her diner, for weary travelers naturally gravitated to that spot. Annie christened each “Bud,” and they carried away the very strange sensation of having been truly rested and refreshed. Bud ran the motel, Bud kept everything ship-shape. And Bud kept everyone entertained. Annie made a home for them all and never, never turned away a stranger. Bud, of course, was the happiest of them all. From the framed photograph hung above the cash register, he could watch the turbo-props come and go (every day but Wednesday).

CONSPIRACY**Tony Brown**

The agent who really killed JFK was last seen at the Dallas Airport buying two tickets to New Orleans using cash covered with Illuminati flyspecks. Why two? I can't tell you.

Surviving Branch Davidians (23 of them) have been spotted in the upstate New York compound of the Rockefellers, all of them having been surgically to resemble David Duke, Doris Day, or Doris Duke -- you decide.

STOP LAUGHING AT ME! It's not like I'm the Antichrist. No -- the Antichrist this week is a small time hood who runs a combination gas station and orgone generator on the outskirts of Las Vegas, where he takes his orders from the disembodied brain of Howard Hughes,

who is in fact Hitler, and always was. Don't believe me? Here's the proof: photos J. Edgar used to keep in his garter belt -- I downloaded them off the Web.

STOP LAUGHING AT ME! There is an order out there, and I need to see it -- just like Elvis did. Now there was a man who knew

the truth --
and that's why the mothership had to come down
and scoop him up for home.

Once upon a time, there were gods and goddesses,
and if we wanted to know who was pulling the
strings
all we had to do was look at the nearest mountain
top, or sacred grove.
Nowadays we can't even see the strings.

But I know there are strings,
and I know someone's hiding them --
there have to be strings
leading back to the reasons --

because there has to be a reason my brother got sick
in the Gulf,
and a reason why no one will tell the truth about it --
and there has to be a reason why good men who
served their country have to live in cardboard boxes
and scrape their survival out of this country's skin
as if they were dirt --

yeah, there's an order out there,
and that is why I sit on my front porch, cradling my
son and my gun,
watching for the black helicopters. And don't even
think of calling me paranoid.
I know all about paranoia. This is not paranoia --

this was born on the Trinity Site, this was raised in
Roswell, and this learned to walk

by forcing its legs against the flood of blood
that has poured from the secret motives
behind this century's wars.

Do you still feel like laughing?

THE HOUR OF THE WOLF

Francis Woodbridge, Jr.

Beware Countercontrol, it turns human beings into animals.

Money talks and animal manure stands silently in
the gutter,
And I am my own cause!
And I am tired of fighting for righteous values,
My face is tired with dreams of influence and
cooperation,
My heart is dead from mismanagement and counter-
control,
And I am my own cause!

And I am hungry and must feed.
And I am hungry and must feed.
And who knows who I am,
Haunting the slums and coffee bars,
Making philotonal music for mutilated peasants,
Butchered by Madison Avenue and the Godzilla of
the workplace.

The music of my youth grows low and dim,
And now I am the wolf,
And I shall vanish into America
And learn the toxic brutality I have fought so long,
And the pain of my butchered sainthood shall come
to me as a form of knowledge
And I shall slash the belly of Godzilla with this
knowledge;
For I have accepted the values of the Federal
Government

And have fought for those values
 And have been slaughtered by the bullshit Godzilla
 of counter-control,
 And I have accepted the values of Christianity
 And have fought for those values
 And have been slaughtered by the bullshit Godzilla
 of counter-control,
 And I have accepted the values of the universities
 And have fought for those values
 And have been slaughtered by the bullshit Godzilla
 of counter-control,

And now I am the victim of radical dehumanization.
 And I am bereft of gallantry.
 And now I have learned to hate the way only an
 animal can hate.

And now I am hungry
 And I shall vanish into America and commit crimes,
 The kind of crimes that make me feel good,
 For now I am possessed with manglehatred,
 And I shall vomit manglehatred on my fellow man
 As manglehatred has been vomited on me.

And I shall feed;
 And always I shall present in my defense
 My record as a saint in the karma-closets of Godzilla,
 And turn,
 And now I am the wolf,
 Hungry, yeah.*

*"Hungry, yeah": original American folk grunt by
 Robert Montano, disabled American Veteran

WHERE THE HELL IS MY REVOLUTION?**Lynne G. Redan**

Blond fraternity boy #206,
make and model generic,
assaults me like the
four/eight pop insinuating itself
onto the palate of my good taste,
as if I came out
to this club
to hear "Oh, you're going home with your
girlfriend?..."

You know you can both come
back to my place later and..."
And desolate women
gyrate as I pass through
their silent tears which
form a grey river that carries me out...
out...

So I go to the club
hidden around the corner,
short hair and white tanktops everywhere
yeah, those girls got "the look"
and men
dressed neatly-
yet I suddenly feel as if
I am in elementary school again
on the asphalt playground,
playing kick-ball.
I remember that the same

three boys were always
captains,
always kicked first,
then the line-up followed
a boy-girl-boy-boy-girl
pattern
so as to cover any mistakes
my sex might make.
And the boys swore
and ran
while we hung back
like mist, reluctant, in
our places
kicked when told to,
but always without fury.
Then we would go home
and our mothers would tell us,
“you know, we only played
jump-rope, hop-scotch,
when we were little girls,”
and they would smile.
Yeah, they would smile like
the boys in this hot-box hot spot as they
gyrate and kiss show off
sleek backs
and tight thighs during
the underwear contest
(boxers verses briefs becoming
a serious issue),
wallowing in the bath of their
pink triangle revolution
as I stand back,
drowning in the translucent

undercurrent of female
conservatism,
as we stand and watch
the boys kick the ball farther,
and I wonder
Where the hell is my revolution?

DRIVE BY SIGHTING**Lynn Anderson**

The old woman makes
her way up Southbridge Street,
stormy day moving clouds
I want to go away.

Her back's
bent like a warped bow.
She stares at her feet
her eyes
have no where
else to go.

My feet hurt
back tired
muscles ache
I can't hear a thing-
don't wanna go to work
in the dreary of the day
want to slip away.

The old woman
with swollen feet
gray stockings
beige sweater,

all I can see
is the back of her white head,
she's straying into the street.

My light turns green.

I drive slowly
past her,

I want to see her face,
her eyes--anything--
and she's carrying
two full bags
that scrap the pavement.

I need to see her eyes.

I stare into the rearview mirror,

now I'm afraid
don't wanna see her face,

what if I see
my own tired blue
eyes, staring
at the ground
forty years from now,

and I'm wondering
the same damn thing,
my feet hurt
my back is tight
my eyes burn

and I don't wanna
be here anymore.

SO OLD AND YOUNG

Chris Mellen

In the night my heated cry
is choked in my throat as lie with my lover
fearing every rattle, each tattletale bedspring
counting them coldly like rosary beads.

A voice inside me screams... stay silent!
The landlady is sleeping on the first floor
and the walls are paper thin.

I've seen her lurking in the park
A shadow of fringe and black lace
slowly wheeling her shopping cart home.

Yet under the raven wings of her Victorian hat
Her eyes are alive, so bright, so blue
Her smile as warm as autumn sun
Thawing the ice of my shy hello in the hallway.

Why this sense of ceremony
waiting for her trembling fingers to find the light
switch
giving me the signal that I am to be received?

She answers the door in her nightgown
although it is the middle of the day
inviting me and my checkbook in for a cup of tea.

I tread the Oriental carpet with clumsy reverence
like a child stepping into the parlor,
with its china cabinets and spidery furniture
indelible relics of a life mostly lived

My hands squirm, my feet wiggle
I almost expect to hear my mother whisper
Don't touch....
Children in grandmother's houses should be seen
and heard.

I am silent under the shadow of memories
crowding the house like a thousand nick-nack cats
crouching like spiders in those corners where she's
too tired and too sensible to clean.

Surrounded by stately porcelain dolls,
a dark rich tapestry of Albanian maidens
weeping over a pile of burning books.

She is hardly alone here
The walls are a jumble of company
Magazine cutouts of puppies and kittens
Cigarette models and movie stars.

The long limbs of a Hindu goddess
snake out almost naked from the wall
A bust of Nefertiti lights up with Christmas tree eyes

She sits in the living room, so small and cosy
nestled under the submarine gloom of her drapes
smiling like a little girl, showing off her pictures
See that's me, when I was young and sexy.

She is so old and young she's forgotten taste and
modesty
as old and young as the stone nipples and crumpled
doilies.

Old enough to wear leopard slippers to the market
Young enough to festoon every finger with silver
rings.

And in the rippling murmur of the television and our
pleasantries
Sipping tea with an audience of porcelain cats and
smiling dolls
Everything is so perfectly in place, so old and young
so delicate and indelibly marked by time
that I don't ever want to leave

Even as she presses the rent receipt into my palm,
and gives her love to Jason and the cats
whom she doesn't hear screaming and scratching in
the night

Even as I drift from under the wonderful gloom
Stepping into the hall,
Stumbling on heavy toddler feet
My eyes adjusting almost reluctantly
to the light.

FLOWERS FOR ISSIAHS**Stacy Serwecki**

One spring evening as I sat watching TV, I thought to myself, "I should go to bed. I have to get up for work tomorrow." I played that game where every fifteen or twenty minutes, I calculated the number of hours and minutes I would have to sleep if I went to bed 'right now.' And still I didn't.

I could have used the excuse of street noise as I had the windows opened wide. The sound of the city filtered in through the screen. Some were identifiable. Others were not. Still and all, I was sticking to my original excuse, as well as the couch. The sudden heat had caught me off guard. The two fans we owned were boxed and hidden under what at the time seemed like a lot of stored stuff. Looking back it wasn't that much. The amount of time I had spent sitting in front of the TV, not really watching the news would surely have been enough time to unpack them. New Englanders lack faith in consistent weather, and I know that by Saturday it might very well snow. Besides, everyone needs a little time to be still.

My daughter was hot, too. We were on the fourth floor and heat rises, even when you don't want it to. She asked to sleep in my bed. "But, can I sleep in your bed Mommy?" she asked when I began the discussion of bedtime. I saw it as the perfect

opportunity to get her to bed, and in a timely fashion.

“Sure,” I said, but if you get up, even once, you’re going back to your room.” She agreed. Maybe she agreed because it was cooler in my room. My apartment was not really a two bedroom. I had set up my room in what would have been the living room otherwise. The living room was the dining room. We ate in the kitchen. My room was up in front of the apartment, and as the wind picked up, down the street, through the high-rises, you could get a really decent breeze. If I opened the backdoor it was nearly a wind tunnel. I didn’t leave the back door unlocked at night though, or the windows either, not since I had found a four-inch clean cut in one of the screens back there.

Anyway, she said she was hot and what seven-year-old doesn’t want to go in their Mom’s room. I let it slide, like I did a lot of things, cleaning rooms, doing dishes, wearing shoes in the park...She was after all my only baby. I watched out for her otherwise. On the plus side for me she was going to bed without the, “drink of water, go to the bathroom, one last kiss, then one more,” litany.

I stared at the TV. I couldn’t tell you what I was thinking about. Not the long work day, not bills, and certainly not the news show. Suddenly I heard shots ring out. I had lived here long enough to know the difference between backfire or firecrackers and a gun shot. It sounded a lot closer than I was used to. Then I heard a sound I had never heard before, and I

never want to hear again. It was a light whiz, or more like a, "zzzihh." A sound a mechanical hummingbird might make, or a bug foreign to the city might make as it mistook the streetlights for the sun. But this was no bird, and probably no mistake. It certainly wasn't foreign enough to people who live near downtown.

My hand went to my chest. I felt a pain there. It wasn't that I was hit. It was realization, that and love. I went into the next room. I ran, I walked, I crawled, none of these seems quite right; though all are possible. I don't remember. Only that I went to my bedroom, the bedroom where my daughter lay sleeping-with the windows opened.

As I raised one of her arms and then the other, she never once moved on her own. I heard a high mewling sound, like a kitten. I tried to sit her up. I turned her one way and then the other. I lifted her long hair to look at her neck. I lifted her pink nighty roughly by the ruffle to get a good look at her back.

They say that, "God watches over small children and drunks." It's a good thing. My daughter didn't wake up. In retrospect, it would not have done her any good to wake up to me handling her in such a way. She had slept through it all. To say someone sleeps like the dead would never have the same meaning.

I realized the mewling sound was me. I tried

to stop it, but only succeeded in breathing faster. Covered in sweat and my own tears, I moved to the window. The police were already there. They had a yellow tape across the doorway, and if TV has taught me anything, the boy being taken away was dead.

Later, I learned he was a boy, that he was twenty-one and his name was Issiahs. I didn't know him, but I had met him when he lived with the Riveras.

I had never tried to save this boy. I had not called the police, or tried to stop his blood from flowing out onto the concrete.

Had my daughter been killed, that too would have been my fault. My pride or my incompetence had let her live here. I picked this apartment. I painted her room pink. For a time I could not afford a better place. I refused to be chased out by crime. I thought myself tough enough to stay. I had let her sleep in the front bedroom.

There was no blood in front of Tony's Fruit, but then it took me a while to look. I tried not to cross the street there. I walked a little farther up. I did look at the doorway from my window. It was easy since it faced the doorway directly. I kept expecting flowers to show up, like in the doorway of the Dakota or the scene of some horrible traffic accident. But that would be innocent of me. I should know how the world feels. They revere celebrities and innocents. And maybe Issiahs was those things to his mom, or maybe to his own

daughter, but not to the rest of the world. He was a boy who was briefly mentioned in the back of the paper - two shots to the chest late at night. There would be no flowers for Issiahs.

THE BAD NURSE**Joel Moore**

Jezzelle, a thirty-three year old, white female, 5 feet 4 inches, Caucasian, history of alcohol abuse. Reading her chart at the nurse's station at Worcester City Hospital, Orthopedic Ward, I'm sipping a black coffee, getting ready to do meds on the 11-7 shift. The graveyard shift. Now I'm a very green LPN, full of compassion and burning idealism, i.e. patient care, patient advocacy, tender loving care, blah, blah, blah.

The graveyard shift at this inner-city poverty stricken enclave called Main South, is truly that. JM-3 is the old part of the hospital and bats flutter through the large maple trees and upper dormers. I double as the house attendant or body snatcher for the hospital on this shift. The attendant is Haitian and believes spirits of the newly dead will enter his soul, so I'm called out to bring a still warm corpse to the refrigerator in the morgue. The old army nurse I do rounds with, wakes everyone in the wee wee hours for meds, vitals and bed changes because she believes rousting the old ones and critical accident victims actually saves them from the blade of the grim reaper, who apparently frolics in JM3 from 11 to 7 in the morning.

The talk at the nurses station is strident and judgmental: Jezzelle is a skid-row drunk who stole a car, cracked it up and got what she deserved (broken tibia, fibula, femur, pelvis, dislocated hip collapsed

right lung, in the ICU for three days). She's from the Public Inebriate Program – actually a crash pad for homeless street people on Public Assistance. She is also a part time prostitute, booster and lush worker when she is sober enough to do so. I'm thoroughly disgusted with such cattie put downs, even though they may be true, because I'm a junkie trying to recover; an alcoholic until my liver rebelled and a male. I believe that the farther down, kicked to the curb somebody is, the more entitled they are to be resurrected in whole.

I walk into her single room and meet her. Her right leg is in traction and suspended in a cast up to her thigh by a wire. Usually a female nurse would assist me in the washing and changing her into bedclothes, but she is in so much pain and hallucinating from delirium tremens that her mouth spouts foul and cruel invectives. I fall in love with her immediately. She is very pretty with long red hair that is dirty, stinky and matted into wino-dread locks. Her body is slender and slightly anorexic with an obvious lack of melanin. It is a fish belly white, a bar tan white skin with thousands of beautiful rust colored freckles everywhere.

First I give her a shot of Mepergan: a combo of Demerol and Fenergan that acts synergistically. A good idea that some opiophobe thought up because I know from banging it mainline that it doesn't get you relief, at least not at 10 milligrams in a 1 milliliter tubex a pop. She grabs me hard and tight by the arm and pulls me down to look at my face. I touch her contorted face and wipe away the tears of pain and rage. She is cold and clammy. Her anguish touches

me. She is sweating and her voice is whiskey drenched and gone from screeching. She is exhausted. " Please dat shit don't help, god, please help."

The Buddhist Chinese girl had refused her own Valium shot a few minutes before and it just happened to be in my jacket pocket. Her mother stayed with her around the clock and obviously that kind of comfort and care was better than a shot in her rump.

Now I'm a patient advocate and as I said, believe in TLC and goddamn I'm not going to watch another person suffer like this. The on-call house doctor is Pakistan Hindu who will not hear of giving Jezzelle anything stronger, and the bitches in white think her pain and suffering are the wages of woman filth and sin. Fuck them all. I go into Jezzelles's private little bathroom. I carefully unwrap my own first-aid kit. Into a bent silver plated tablespoon (from my mother's Welch cupboard) I dump a glassine bag of good Bronx white heroin. I cook it up simmering it with bacteriostatic H₂O properly PHed for the blood stream. I suck it into my diabetic syringe. I squirt the yellow liquid Valium into the spoon to deglaze it and then suck that through the rolled up chunk of cigarette filter (unsmoked for maximum sterility). My sweet Franco-American porcelain broken angel, sister of the grape, is going to French kiss god.

When I walk back out I notice it really is chilly in her room and cover her broken body carefully with a warm blanket and white cotton bedspread. She is

sobbing, defeated and I can see it is not affected. It is a cry from the depths of her broken, mad soul and body. I bend down to her ear and say, "Hold very still because I am going to give you a shot in the arm for the pain. Something much stronger than you've been getting. The doctor wants you to be comfortable." I don't tie her arm off. She is thin and her radial-brachial vein is blue and ample. The little 2-milliliter syringe is so full of this potion that the plunger is almost all the way out. The blood, dark red bubbles up the needle and I shoot the yellow liquid very tenderly, slowly and carefully into her arm for close to a minute. I smile and wipe her face. Some rose color flushes into it. Her hand reaches mine and squeezes. It is warm and the trembling is gone. She drifts off into a colorful world of deep dreams. I kiss her forehead, turn out the light and join the army nurse and the brigade of opiophobics to roust 90 year olds and broken bodies of all ages. The grim reaper is watching.

In the patient's chart I document the prescribed meds and note Jezzelle is resting comfortably. In the cafeteria I see my old nursing school instructor and explain empathetically my concern. I request something stronger for my patient during the day shift. After all New York dope was \$20 a bag at the time. The next night I noticed her meds had been changed to Dilaudid Morphine and Zanax. My former instructor sleeps around with the residents. She can be a sweetheart.

On my break I walk into Jezzelle's room and ask how she's doing tonight. "How's about I wash your hair?"

She blushes shyly, vulnerable and says in her street woman voice, "Yeah, that would be far out." I wash and rinse the dark water of the gutter filth and smoke filled barrooms away. I comb and brush the mats and dreads away with mineral oil. This radiant red Viking crown flows to her stomach. I change her gown, admiring her breasts, tiny bee waist and rouge bush of pubic hair. I give her a back rub on my next break. I want to heal her magically. She says "Goddamn I'll take a male nurse any day of the week." I says "Well Miss Jezzelle, I've been where you've been. I lived on the streets in Seattle, hustling on 1st Ave., drinking Bokay and Tokay, blacking out: being dragged around by my Indian brothers of the grape." She pulls me to her and says, "Come here." I go to her and brush her silky hair back and look into her rabbit-timid-blue eyes and smile. "You're special." She says, "No, come here!" We kiss deep tongue felt deep moaning kiss. She holds my face and says, "Thank you, fuck this brother sister stuff. I want you. You're sweet." "Well we'll see what happens, but I'll be here for you, and first let's get you on your feet. You are busted up pretty good. We'll be together for at least a month or so. Good night Jezzelle."

About two weeks later we made it Crazy. Her one leg is stuck up in the air dangling from a wire and her other leg is coiled around my back and we're pumping away and our eyes are laughing at each other because we must be quiet.

After Jezzelle left I got lonely and bored. One night, doing meds, I looked at the blue bottle of Roxinal,

liquid morphine and thought; that has been there for years. I locked myself in the stainless steel medroom and chug-a-lugged the whole bottle. Luckily I was chipping at the time or I might have nodded all the way out. I figured I better turn in my narcotics keys before I lost my license.

Two weeks later I was working at Worcester State Hospital - psychiatry. As I prepared the meds I remembered thinking, good career move, there are no drugs here I want to take.

AN OBSERVER SUMS UP CITY HALL

Michael J. Jackman

I once thought the Nipmuck tribe was a culture of the past like the Etruscans.

No it is not. I see them frequently downtown, right in their native land.

Quinsigamond was the old Nipmuck name for Worcester, although I doubt they'd call it that today.

They'd probably label it 'the land of the rusting basketball hoop' because that's what you see

As you walk up it's geometrically deserted streets.

Those tired, worn old steel circles,
 Nailed to every other garage door
 Announcing that kids once lived there
 And have since grown up and gone.
 The only signs of life will come
 From an aging widow with her attack dog.

This is the Worcester that the politicians write their speeches for.

They don't play for us because we're not here.
 We're in New York, L.A., Kinshasa, Dallas,
 Abidjan, Shanghai, Beijing, Paris, Bangalore.

The only time we're here in Worcester is when we go outside to get into the car.

The rest of our lives is taken up by uninterrupted television.

Our only power over our immediate

environment is measured by the time it takes to walk

From our front door to the car.

We have nothing to do with Worcester

Unless we read all the junk mail and cut out
the coupons.

The here and now belongs to business leaders
who behave like Czars.

And we resolve ourselves to overlook it

Like a minor irritation.

You can talk about the democratic process if
you want

But we're no different from the Ching
Dynasty.

Let her go! Let her go! God bless her!

HURRY UP, PLEASE, IT'S TIME

The Waldorf Cafeteria on Main Street right
on Federal Square an institution right out of the
Depression, just like its culinary sister, the White
Tower.

This was the kernel of the Hippy movement
within Worcester. It was a tawdry eatery that was
known for its bookies, its numbers racketeers, wine-
bibbers, retired Albanian cooks, antique courtesans
known as "drag queens" and other assorted queens
of the night.

It was in 1962 that two young men made their
debut here: Gitch and Sibley. They were a typical
Gothic couple in a familiar Worcester scenario: both

of them were gay and both of them were ashamed to admit it. But that was all right, you were supposed to be ashamed back in 1962.

Sibley behaved more like a business-like straight guy, which made him the luckier of the two. He wasn't simply an announcer, he was the "Herold of the century" for Worcester. All through the entire decade, his shrill, enthusiastic voice could be heard ringing out and bouncing off the Waldorf tiles. There were typical matter-of-fact comments such as.

"There's gonna be a revolution!"

or

"The CIA is watching Lennie Bruce!"

or

"The mods and the rockers are rioting in Birmingham!"

He was a gregarious herald as heralds go. He was the town crier of Federal Square. His table was always full.

Gitch, on the other hand, was not as straight as he wanted to be. His first great love occurred when he was a paperboy in his home town not far from there. He fell in love with a statue on the estate of the customer on his route. He actually stayed there long after he delivered, walking around the grounds all hours.

When night drew on, however, he was as furtive as hell, even though it was dark and everyone was fast asleep and Gitch stood on his toes in spine-tingling apprehension in the bushes before he finally emerged into the clearing and approached the statue and climbed up on the pedestal, embracing its leg and waist and arm and finally its magnificent marble

neck.

He thought he must have looked like a snake in the moonlight. Gitch clung to it with all his might and whispered.

“Oh! Baby! Baby! How I love you! If you only knew!”

This life-size chunk of Carrara marble couldn't know. As gorgeous as it was, it was cold and unyielding and indifferent. His hot blood soon cooled off from the temperature of the stone.

No. Gitch was not as straight as he wanted to be. In order to survive the hostile fifties in his young gay sensibilities he adopted the unique tactic of disguising himself as a foreigner.

Everyone asked him what his nationality was since there was always the slightest hint of an accent in his speech. He had a different answer.

Turkish

Russian

Rumanian

Italian

German

Anything that was not American. Why? For him to be an American was a person unfulfilled, an outcast, a chi-chi, a blacky-white.

Out of self-defense, he fasted on American culture and its facile egotism and he tuned out Madison Avenue.

Gitch came to the Waldorf and he went on strike against the USA. In his own apartment.

He listened only to Classical and ethnic music. He was no longer a loser in hot competition with the New Frontier's "Oi Polloi", he was a rich

heir to a fortune from the past, a fortune that never let him down. He was no longer a loser.

Everything in his life was arranged to duplicate the young LaSalle, the lonely homosexual heir who lived in the estate above his street surrounded by Scotch gardeners, the only ones left to his deceased family.

It seemed like an off-beat fantasy at first, but then what was really all that different from LaSalle's life? It was all in his own mind: that leisurely room overlooking a Renaissance garden with badminton court and even a pig-pen, as opposed to Gitch's simple kitchen studio overlooking Salem Square.

Money was the difference. And shame kept it that way. The good old fashion Protestant ethnic shame....which screamed at him, which screamed at everybody from its solemn down-town statues, crying out "You have no right to anything!

"Nothing is yours!"

His pad on Salem Square foretold the coming of the psychedelic era.

HURRY UP, PLEASE, IT'S TIME!

Gitch and Sibley originally went into the Waldorf after originally went into the Waldorf after the last call and the old 'Doff was jumping. Drunks were staggering, bookies and numbers hoods were pacing nervously and bidding. Amidst this chaos they talked about their future bookstore.

They would open it together. There would be a bistro in the back which served "oefs au Miroir"

with Chasseur sauce for hungry browsers and it would be called,

Gitch 'n Manasha's Nashes.

Other gays joined them, so the topic didn't last too long. It changed to what they called "girl talk" and sharing of gay fish stories.

Folk tales of sexual athletics

Hilarious at first

Nevertheless

It tended to get monotonous like

Love lyrics:

With their 'arms full of charms'

And their 'lips of wine'

Hold me! Never let me go! And other various rhinestones that spelled out early porno.

HURRY UP! PLEASE! IT'S TIME!

We're changing our consciousness! Sibley sang out one night, and I'm sure he capitalized it in his brain. This gave way to other curious youths who had more things in common with the rest of themselves, such as

literature

folk music

poetry

art

In 1964 Worcester watched with glee the downfall of the Top Ten.

All the rage was the literary cultist know as Steve Martin (no relation to the crappola comedian). He imitated Holden Caulfield right down to the hat. He read Dylan Thomas and wrote confessions. He

dared to act out verbs that some people hardly ever used.

In the fall of '64 there appeared a Narragansett Indian whom everyone called "Just Plain Bill".

Besides 'cannabis sativa', he introduced the world of William Burroughs' "Naked Lunch" to all, writing what was about the exciting urgency of addiction to heroin.

"Just Plain Bill" introduced us to that human phenomenon known as Pepper. When I first met Pepper he was wearing a black raincoat, the type that sheltered tweeds from the elements on rainy days. He looked like he just came from a funeral Mass. The Mass of the establishment. The establishment that had what Roosevelt called its "rendez-vous with destiny".

This same generation that hit the beach at Normandy was now on its way to turning the land of Tecumseh, Metacomet, Pontiac and Audubon into one massive parking lot from coast to coast.

Pepper was the Hermes Treismegisthis
The messenger of the Tibetan Nirvana
He also got a pad within the downtown
neighborhood.

Both Gitch and Pepper took out LP's of famous writers reading from their works and kept them like guests in their studios. Pepper brought his own Mahayana Buddhism to Central Massachusetts. He brought it to Bruce Arnold, Norman Schell, Walter Crockett, Steve Martin, to the notorious Birdboy, the Messenger of Bacchus, to January, to Dave Jarzowski, to Jaime Brockett, to Eric Hanson,

to Midge Batell, to Barbara Bergstrom.

This was the Gang of Four that ruled over Worcester youth for three years. The cultural revolution out of the Waldorf

Gitch playing the mandolin

Sibley pontificating

Just Plain Bill reciting beat poetry

Pepper contemplating the brief
advantages of mortality.

HURRY UP! PLEASE! IT'S TIME!

In 1968 the Worcester Punch was born.

Manasha Bilsey and Frank Dudock were the editors.

With the Punch came Maha-Gitchee, the astrologer of renown, imparting celestial knowledge, the Arbiter of taste.

The Pontiff of Worcester who consulted the heavens for your business decisions.

The year 1968 also brought the crumbling of the early purple gaurd in the form of a Brad Pitt look-alike who was addicted to a mundane as well as cheap Colt-45.

That was the end of harmony between Gitch and Sibley.

LSD REARED ITS Timothy Leary head.

An acid trip became a must rather like an audience with the Pope that Cardinal Coty tried to set up for all the stars back in the 'forties.

It required all the paraphernalia of a Reike

treatment. Food, tea, Ravi Shankar, sandalwood incense, fresh fruit.

The acid trip justified Herman Hesse for the USA, as well as the Upanishads.

“Just plain Bill” acquired diamonds on every finger as well as equally mysterious shades.

Pepper became a Buddhist *eikon* and retreated to a mountaintop.

The State of Massachusetts always had a reputation for hermits throughout its history.

HURRY UP! PLEASE! IT'S TIME!

The Waldorf was closed in 1976, submitting to its ultimate destiny as a parking lot, like the rest of an overdeveloped USA.

Hippie headquarters switched to “Book People”.

By 1970, Congress Alley went the way of all songs. Worcester's Hippies were at the Y-Not then the Blue Plate of Holden.

Worcester, once the second largest city in New England had not simply shrunken into a small town, but into a sprawling, Spanish-speaking village. The nearest one could get to a Hippie headquarters was a Mexican AA on Austin Street consisting of a handful of Yaqui Indians.

Manasha was left sitting behind a broken cash register at Bookpeople as the rest of the Hippies drifted off to California, Bridgewater doing walk-ons in the Titticut Follies (still tabu on Massachusetts

TV), Vermont, Provincetown, and L.A.

Gitch took up residence in a little bit of Guangdong Province on Southbridge Street. He went on living without the heavy billion-dollar industries that constituted a revived Hollywood, Tin Pan Alley, Ford Motors, American Tobacco.

Life was easy without them.

For decades, he lived on less than \$50 a week.

In the late seventies, he entertained himself with Chinese opera, Indian movies, Gypsy records, Charles Ives, Egyptian rap, Arcangelo Corelli (still unavailable on CDs).

He made it into the Third Millennium untouched, unharmed, unhanded, uncredited, unknown.

Only a superstition could lure him back to Christianity and it almost happened.

But he had to participate in Christianity's Czarist caste system.

He thrived on literature and Classical music.

He also cruised the common at night.

He realized why people were leaving Worcester in droves.

This proved to be the norm of Worcester Nightlife.

HURRY UP! PLEASE! IT'S TIME!

By the eighties Worcester was another country. It was Soviet Jews and Albanian Moslems that joined the flocks of other immigrants that came to make up the new population. All the other industries were gone leaving one that was awaiting its turn: Worcester Real Estate. With new rents that turned

Worcester into concentration camps of flunkies and petty thieves.

More detestable than communists, more odious than Native Americans, more disgusting than paupers wandering around from State Hospital asking for a cigarette.

See? That guy doesn't have his shirt buttoned on right! These people are so low that they can't afford to get married, let alone stay married!

Gitch returned to Hinduism.

Nonparticipation of the outcaste class.

The person without a paycheck.

The non-person lost in a giant parking lot from coast to coast!

CONGRESS ALLEY**David Nader**

After the Gold Rush of 67, they returned to their provincial hamlet to establish a culture to counter the clockwise culture of conformities and deformities. Initially they were their own inspiration. For almost two years the nationally recognized Y-Not Coffeehouse on Main-South had established the basis for an artists colony.

The Y-Not grew out of a desire for a folk club from students at Worcester Junior College. A committee was able to enlist the backing of the local YMCA for a storefront that would justify its existence as a community service. This attracted young people who were already infected by the folk-revival of the early 1960's. This infection had spread to the commercial rock world where '...Baby, baby I love you...' was no longer enough. It soon settled into the heart of the city.

The crest of lower Pleasant Street begins to slouch towards downtown, giving easy access to the area known as Crown Hill. This section of Worcester started out in the Federalist era as a gentrified perch overlooking a good portion of the city. In the 1960s it was a less favored working class and lower income neighborhood. At one point, beginning in '67 till the end of '68 the place became known as Congress Alley.

Abodes were chosen similar to those of the Golden

Keystone Cops, looking for proper parking spaces while everyone took advantage of the time and went out back through the Alley to avoid arrest. Transportation of small items using pulley clotheslines with small buckets and conversations between houses with military walkie-talkies ensured compliance with the dictum, 'If its known its blown'. What was meant to be known appeared at the Omnibus head shop, in Ray Girrard, Jack Tubert or Elaine Prostack's T&G columns or with WORC's hip radio personality, Jeff Starr. Basil found humor in the free advertising and danger in what it would bring.

And why did Ms. Seduceki wear a clear plastic raincoat when she danced nude in the warm rain? What was it about this Worcester sensibility, rich in all elements with one always amiss? Why does it so easily breed such a comfortable retardation? Walter and Marie tried their best but they could not. Their encouragement to grow your own cultural greenery often ended up with Free being sold at a second hand boutique.

Things got hot so Basil pulled out of the oven before his sauce burned. Two weeks later the crunch came down. Sgt. Leahy would get his revenge, as Congress Alley became another footnote nobody bothered to look up anymore.

became enchanted with this oasis in the middle of bland land...We weren't ready to settle for a middle of the road purgatory...I remember walking into a room and seeing women with tarot cards...It was the first time I heard about food co-ops...It was the first time I got ripped off."

They came with noble intentions fueled by ideologies, isms, anarchic paradigms and past wisdoms. They believed in better living through chemistry. They were challenging traditional values. A jell of people from diverse backgrounds; townies, street people, runaways, middle-class, working class, hoodsies, hoodlums, together in a different way. They had not seen love like this before.

The stew became thicker. The tastes and flavors of possibilities swirled around as Basil watched. Who knew what would happen next?

Time had come today with Life and Newsweek to turn more people on than Tim Leary ever imagined in his wildest pipe dreams. Intelligencia tripping with their cats in Harvard Square apartments. Journalists in the name of reportage veritae, teaching America how to roll its own. If you read between the buttons you could see Henry and Claire Booth Luce proclaiming the American Century would be Psychedelic. A new lexicon filled minds with a spiritual jargonese and gave everyone another name. The national press coined the term Hippie, while the HIP merchants along with the city of San Francisco encouraged kids to come to the Haight so they could speculate on nationwide marketing and distribution.

hooking them up with shelters run by religious groups. Nobody ever had to ask, 'Who was that masked man?' He was a white light dressed in black, not impressed by the Mel Lyman-Fort Hill like ideologies, which could sometimes smother reality like a warm marshmallow. Basil realized this urban nomad would not sell-out or buy-in because they could never offer him more than he could do for himself. Basil knew Pasquale would leave, looking for his Blackmobile and the road that soothed.

Basil didn't realize at that time he too would succumb to the white-line-fever. His head still hummed with the sounds of all the musicians who passed through the Alley. Would he be able to find the time to tell you?

Bruce Arnold's Orpheus was always brought up, but it was Bruce's older brother, Lester who exhibited style. Lester was more old school; Beat, hard edged yet hungry for the sweeties. Tony Rubino was not forgotten by any of the other musicians as Howie Hersh kept the rhythm section honest until he ended up in LA where its Rap. Jim Kweskin and family found the Alley when they played The Little Theater. Bob Dagnello killed some time there before he got all that jazz. Steve Martin made sure all had songs to play with Elliot Sherman tickling the keys. Jamie Brockett sang a ballad to the Titanic as the communal ship descended.

Basil, like everyone else, smiled at the musician some thought of as the Water Buffalo. (That hang back and observe stance) He was from the streets of

into the Rainbow Nation...Good seed was spread around. Some of the flowers rooted."

Standing by the shores of Gitch's Goomy, Basil saw cultural litter accumulate like flotsam from a maligned orgy of social experiments. Gitch spoke in many tongues of lost songs and overblown sexualities. Using the heavens, interpersonal weather reports were forecasted on the Daily Blues. He delivered periodic Punches edited with Another Story for alternative consumption.

The political rag could be found in Martin's Department Store taught with other interesting items. Musical forms that were once common were now available in delightfully mutated ditties. What some considered bottom of the barrel literature could be found elevated to a religion of possibilities. A peanut gallery behind home plate fed themselves a diet of naked lunches on rye.

The superintendent of fools was a figure-head-shop Icon. Quietly brooding he would Pepper the silence with mystical aphorisms he acquired by osmosis while concealed by the shadows of the Alley. His Omnibus, for all to wonder about. *The two officers entered and the place went black. Only the woodwork glowed an electric green and orange. Pepper switched on the strobes and the constables on patrol were no longer able to do their special stroll as the floors appeared to move and the walls pulsed. Officers can I help you?* The Blue Meenies as well as Carly Simon were drawn to this decoy, prospect house, drop-out center. The longer the stores remained open, more ghosts

haunted by the present would glide through their walls and more junk would accumulate on the shelves.

The ghosts never really disappeared. Basil's peripheral vision caught site of them every now and then. Charlie Edlin, the organization, PR, business, systems guy who tried to keep the books straight even though it was hard to keep all his names straight. Were you dealing with Vince Peril or Raphael Zantini? Yes, and how about Midge, Maggie, January, Kelliher, Eric Hanson or Terrence O'Sullivan? MacKillian would scamper about in only a sheet with a hole in the middle. Charlie escaped the Brink of disaster practicing aesthetic redemption; repainting the fire hydrants to ignite imaginations rather than put out fires. So many came through in that short year and a half.

Basil pondered the validity of the new knowledge wondering if the blind were leading the blind.

Woody (Francis Woodbridge Jr.) graduated from Clark University and melted into the bittersweet scene like a block of Baker's Chocolate. A literate man who had everyone's number but seemed to have misplaced his own after spreading his wings and running into a hailstorm. Woody emerged with all his letters but spent a good deal of time rearranging the words.

Kay Woodbury was everyone's little sister. High in the sky, naked under the flag, real and raw, she knew the past doesn't go away. A person can not be judged as good even when he or she dies. The effects of their

actions live on. (Frank Taylor would say, Karma kickback.) As in Sun Tzu's Art of War, she knew about the struggle as an ongoing continuum that involved all aspects of daily life. The war memorials claim they are dead, yet Moms have picture proof of their continued existence. We pay for our sins on the installment plan. The Government kept tabs on her poetics.

Al McGinnis completed four years in the service, during which time he attempted to sign up for duty in Viet Nam. Instead, he wound up in Worcester where he found the Y-Not and Congress Alley. He drew no flak from this jungle of love while he maintained a tight security on this new beachhead of urban hipness. His memory bears the scars of a utopia gone awry.

Bobby Bradford appeared as though he came down from the heavens pure in ideology and intent. His Hippie ideals were soiled and kicked around in the street until he put his pie in the sky and headed for the coast.

Basil knew there was more to this dream than Howard-Johnson's 28 flavors of negativity when he reflected on the magic christian.

He made his home in the bed that accepted him. The teenie weenies who found their way to the alley were often in a similar situation except they lacked the tools to deal with the not so compassionate street. Engaging in a constant war of guerrilla social work he spared them from the lizards and vampires by

The Diggers staged Death of Hippie\ Birth of Free but the canned music wouldn't die. The Communication Co. told people not to come. Would there have been a panic if it was allowed to stay organic? Being a Folkie, Basil winced at the products of the Pop-culture.

"Nothing happened there. Just a bunch of kids waiting around for drugs...It was a theater of manipulation...Big egos ruled...They were power freaks exploiting kids who were lost in their own rejection."

Good Humor dripped from the Pig Sucker as he dispensed the cream of the crop from his ice cream truck. The flavor of the week was quite often an herbal variety. The sweet dreams left fingers sticky, faces fudgy and buds tasty.

Thinking they were the Crown Hill of creation and their body's sacred vessels, they drank up. The flowers went up in smoke when nature said hello, and heaven dissolved in their mouths not in their hands as they spoke in tongues. Some by-passed their natural defenses completely. The Corporation pushed the Main-line and Wiley was the first casualty.

"We were trying to live better electrically but we didn't know how to rid the organism of tolerance from the invasion of disease...Was the Alley important in itself? No it wasn't. It was a drop or two of water in the collective pool that would refract light

abandonment, a foster home refugee setting down with the Y-Not scene. A musician and Y-Not manager. A liberator of the senses. Norman made music playing the Schell game as Sallys came through the alley and he practiced for Clean Living.

Tuned into Sirens, the soundsmiths and eye candy affectionados lusted for Marcia Sadowski's Peppermint girls. Worcester's first all woman rock band. Few got beyond the surface of this candy coated libertine. Satisfied with instant gratification, it was easy to cheat ones self out of the special center. A generous creative center filled with a kind of love they may not ever know.

In spite of the heavenly sounds Basil was never able to rid himself of the bad tastes that remained in his mouth from some of Ho-Jo's flavors of negativity.

Those mid-nightmares of black limos with tinted windshields and blonde bombshells from all over the East Coast. It would be at least 2 a.m. before they reached the Alley with bittersweet pretty poisons. A moonlight swim at Long Pond was a refreshing prelude to the monkey business with which these Vampirellas sated their appetites. "...the damage done."

Sometimes Basil would try to distinguish between funny peculiar and funny ha-ha. As when his Mom told him she called the police so he would not get in trouble with the contents of the plastic baggie she came across while putting his clothes away. And there were the police, fumbling around like the

Coast communalists. They were pre-gentrified, inexpensive Victorian houses with enough height to view the sunrise and sunset and close enough to reach urban amenities via the heel-and-toe-express. The community assumed the handle Congress Alley, named after the passageway abutting the rear of their homes on Congress Street, which paralleled the lower downtown section of Pleasant Street.

A great anticipation had been building. Something is happening. A change is gonna come. People themselves were changing. Teilard De Chardin's spiritual evolution of the species was being psychedelized by transforming the profane consciousness into a sacred project accessible to all. A chorus of Do It Yourself challenged all areas of expertise.

Sweet Basil, the Shrewsbury Colonial who brought it all back home, was the second ingredient in the communal stew. Although he was the second to move into the Alley, he was usually the first to volunteer his services. As he blended in, the stew simmered until it became a hot pot of self-discovery; indulging in the moment, emitting non-judgmental aromas of fun and laughter. The odiferous broth attracted refugees from the hills of mediocrity who would sip from this sense of community and return again after school, on weekends or would never leave.

Standing outside the Y-Not, Basil would invite the kids inside rather than remain at the sewerside.

"We came in from the suburbs, loosened our ties and

HOUSE MAN**Mike Mason**

I came to Worcester in 1985 to play pool. That's pool, with a capital `P', and that rhymes with `T', and that stands for Trouble, and that's what we've got right here in River City. Or in this case, the Little Apple, or Wormtown, or whatever colorful name the locals favor at any given time.

Elite Billiards was the New England hot spot for pool action at that time, and I was primed for some serious pool activity. Gene Tivnan, the owner, and now member of the New England Billiards Hall of Fame, was a good player on the downside of his playing career. The obligatory 1960's black and white photo of Gene and Willie Mosconi, in their neat haircuts and sharkskin suits, hung on the wall near the counter.

Across from City Hall, smack on Main Street, the doorway next to The Newsstand was graced with a narrow sign reading BILLIARDS ONE FLIGHT UP, with that cartoon hand pointing up to the stairs...the top hat, white gloves, and cane adding a comical touch of class. I walked up that flight of stairs and shook Gene's hand, announcing that I was ready to take him up on his offer to be his "house man".

For me, that meant unlimited table time...free practice. For Gene, that meant a strong player

and I can't shake him. We were dead even.

Play intensified, I came very close to my best pool, but no matter what I threw at this kid, he fired right back. We went at it with a real vengeance now, and were at a stalemate. Finally, the beach boy, as he was preparing to break open a rack, utterly exasperated, exclaimed, "Sheee-it!!! This is the toughest one-dollar nine-ball I ever played in my life." I had to agree.

"Me, too. Who are you, anyway? I thought Gypsy and Doc were the best in Worcester, but they can't beat you. How can you live in Worcester and play so well and me not know about you?"

"Worcester? Is that where I am? Hell, I'm not from Worcester, I'm from Denver. I'm a truck driver just passing through."

"Truck driver my eye. Joe, why didn't you tell me he's not a local?"

"You didn't ask."

We raised the stakes from a dollar a game to forty a game, and when closing time came, I knew I had earned my three hundred dollar winnings.

Vietnamese were banging some straight billiards. I played some 3-cushion billiards, not much straights as being played here, but figured I'd get used to it.

I was to get used to straight billiards and have some wonderful experiences battling opponents I couldn't understand, while the spectators, or railbirds, crowded around, leaning on the table, barely allowing the shooter room to maneuver, clapping and hooting and hollering at the good shots, and laughing and joking almost uncontrollably at the mistakes.

This day, they were jumping all around a young man, a sandy-haired, beach boy-looking type, who I noticed had a pretty solid stroke. It was all in fun and in keeping with a lazy afternoon at Elite Billiards. I was beginning to feel at home.

I grabbed a tray of balls and took to practicing on table two. I left table one open, the table in front of the counter, the table that would become my personal torture chamber for willing and unwilling opponents. Everyone wants to play on the head table, so I left it there for others who might show.

For now, I just wanted to start my training. It would be a few days before the eyes began focusing correctly, a few weeks before the stroke was in springlock shape, and possibly months before the competitive juices shook off the peace and tranquility of too many pool-less days and nights.

One way to jump-start the training was to

immediately get tangled up in a money match. You shoot well or you lose your money, a great motivator for focusing one's attention. But that was not for me. I came in peace. I knew about Gypsy, and I knew about Doc, but I wasn't going to look for them, to challenge them. They were good, very good, but not in my class. I was now a Worcester boy and would not take advantage of my home town compadres. I came in peace.

The beach boy wandered over soon enough and asked if he could work out with me, and I said sure, that's what I'm here for, I'm the new house man. He asked to play for stakes, but I came in peace. We agreed to a sociable dollar-a-game nine-ball, just to make it interesting, you understand.

Four or five of my dollar bills made a quick escape from my pocket as I struggled to stay with a young tiger who obviously was not rusty, he was too young for that kind of thing. I was quite impressed with his solid, yet fluid stroke that I had immediately noticed earlier, and pleased, actually, at his nonchalance and quiet confidence. And he kept asking to raise the stakes.

Not serious money, but it's no fun to give up dollar bill after dollar bill, especially since I'm supposed to be in control. After all, I am the house man. That got me to buckling down, to reaching into the dark recesses and dusty corners of my dormant competitive spirit.

I battled back to where I was down a few dollars, yet had the too-familiar impression that I was being allowed to do so. The beach boy was a gift from the pool gods, I thought, the vehicle to push me quickly on the road to pool recovery. We continued to trade racks back and forth, with me being down four or five dollars at all times. And he kept asking to raise the stakes.

This rankled me a bit. Just a few dollars, but my dollars, and they are in his pocket. I want them back. And a few of his. The juices were really starting to flow now, and everything I need to defend myself was becoming more evident as play proceeded. I came up with a few stellar runs, blasts from the past, to remind myself of how good I can be, and also to raise my opponent's eyebrow just a bit.

Joe Sweeney showed up, and took his soon to be familiar perch at the foot of whatever table I was playing on. Joe was quickly to become my best Worcester buddy, a strong contender for hairyleg hall-of-fame honors. Joe played, not too well, but loved to watch. He started watching me and continued to do so for my whole Worcester experience.

As afternoon melted into night, my game began to take form, and I found myself ahead that four or five dollars instead of behind. The beach boy wasn't fazed by my level of play being lifted, and put together some really good stuff, and I made the note to Joe that we had been playing for five hours now,

and I can't shake him. We were dead even.

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SOLE ATTRACTION

Tom Ewart

I first came here in the early evening; the late spring light was fading into a purple gray, and the city glowed like an old bruise. The bus ride down from Ft. Devens was a milk run, dropping off the empty bottles of soldiers along the whole route. I kept looking at roadside markers; I saw plenty for a place called Wor-cess-ter, but nothing for Woostah. I began to think that either I was on the wrong road, or the city existed only in the minds of the local populace.

Finally the bus crawled through the circle at Lincoln Square and rolled into the Seven Hills Plaza. I entered the lobby of the station and sat down in the coffee shop, in a booth in front of a plate glass window that stared into a parking lot. The girl I was coming to see had given me directions to her house. Once I got my bearings, I walked toward a city bus stop in the center of town.

In the twilight, the main drag appeared a work shirt grown soft and slightly frayed with use. I noticed a library, a couple of churches, a solid rock of a city hall, and the usual merchant buildings. Nestled in the piggy toes of some foothills, this place could be anyplace.

Two blocks away, I spied the city bus I needed working its way down Main Street. Traffic was light, so I strolled across the thoroughfare in the middle of the block and perched on a bench in front of a

department store. Mannequins in the window gazed vacantly at my back. From the corner of my eye, I saw a beat cop stride up to me.

"Excuse me, buddy. Can I see some identification?"

"...Ah, sure, Officer." I fished my wallet out of my jeans, and handed him my military ID and my Virginia driver's license. "Anything the matter?"

He studied the photographs on each. "Yeah, you were jaywalking."

"Say again?"

"Whaddaya need, a definition?" He looked at my identification more closely. "Then and now, hunh?"

My hair had been a lot longer in the photo on my driver's license. "Before and after, so to speak. It's still me, though."

"Yeah, right. You stationed at Devens?"

"For now. I leave for 'Nam in five days."

"Yeah? My kid brother's there. A cook at some place called Khe Sanh."

"How long's he got left?"

"Four and a half months. He writes us not to worry, that now it's all downhill on his tour."

My bus arrived; its doors opened with a hiss. "Say, Officer, can I get going? This's my bus. I'm here to visit my girl."

A squad car pulled up behind the bus. The cop in the passenger seat, an older man with chevrons on his sleeve, leaned out the open window. "Everything okay, Harrity?"

Harrity looked at him briefly. "No problem, Sergeant. Just a jaywalker."

"Right. You know the drill, then. Carry on." The cruiser pulled away into the exhaust of the departing bus.

With a sigh, Harrity pulled a ticket book from the pocket of his uniform trousers. He copied down my name and base address with a stubby pencil, ripped the original from the book, and handed it to me with my identification.

"Hey! What's this?"

"A citation for jaywalking. There'll be another bus in about twenty minutes." He pocketed his book.

Dumbfounded, I stared at the pale form in my hand. "Ten dollars! You must be kidding!"

"Fraid not. You can mail it in."

I looked up at this guy not too much older than me. The smooth gold band on his blunt finger told me he was married; he probably had a kid and a draft deferment for essential duty. "Can't you cut me some slack here, Officer?"

He met my gaze, but I could tell he was uncomfortable and wanted to be elsewhere. "Look, soldier, we had a juvenile get hit in the street three days ago, not twenty feet from where we're standing. The kid's in a coma up at the hospital. Since then, we've been told to crack down on jaywalkers. If my duty sergeant hadn't come by when he did, this might've been a different story. You're in the Army; you know how it is."

"Jeez."

Harrity hesitated. "Whaddaya do in the service, anyway?"

"I'm a medic, in a field hospital. Sorta like

M*A*S*H without the comedy.”

“Oh, I hear you. ...Well, keep your head down over there.”

“Yeah, right.” I stuffed the ticket in my pocket. “I just hope I don’t run into your brother.”

He shot me a funny look. “Yeah, me too.” Then he moved on, his head bent, his hands clasped behind his back.

I caught the next bus out to my girl’s house. There weren’t many passengers; I sat up front, and asked the driver to let me out at the street I wanted. He dropped me off near an abandoned wooden sausage factory. I walked about a quarter-mile up a rutted dirt road. The sign at the corner had read “Private Street - Dangerous.” I wondered if I should keep my eye peeled for snipers in the treeline.

My girlfriend and her family were just finishing dinner. The house smelled of cabbage. While I wolfed a sandwich of leftovers, she laughed at my excuse for being late. Only in Worcester, she said. I certainly hoped so.

As she sat across the kitchen table from me, she looked mighty fine in her tank top and tight bluejeans. Hey, I was a red-blooded American boy. Her curves had caught my eye when I first saw them in a low-rent nightclub just off post. Now my desire to hug them had brought me to this dropforge town.

And then we hopped in her white Mustang convertible with the red interior and drove back downtown to the Showcase Cinema. I don’t remember what was playing. I do remember the wildflower smell of her hair, the curve of her breast against my arm.

Afterward we drove into Hope Cemetery (an oxymoron if ever there were one) and fumbled around in the cramped back seat. She told me she wanted to be a virgin when we got married. I wasn't planning anything that far ahead. I told her I wanted something to remember her by in the jungle. She hunted through the glove compartment; with a Swiss Army knife, she hacked off a length of her hair. She gave it to me slipped into an offering envelope from Our Lady of Perpetual Help. At that point, I figured I'd need all I could get.

At midnight, she ferried me back to the bus station. Daddy would be upset, she said, if she were out too late. We kissed, all tongues and teeth. When she drove off, I watched the tracer rounds of her tail lights fade toward Kelly Square, and I wondered if I'd ever be back here, and what sort of shape I'd be in if I were.

The next bus to base wasn't due until four in the morning. I ordered coffee and a danish and slumped in the same booth as before. When the waitress asked me if I were headed for Devens, I said yes; she assured me she'd see to it I was awake. I swung my legs up on the seat and soon nodded off.

The whacks on the soles of my shoes were incoming rounds exploding in my bunker. I sat up with a jerk. This one turned out to be a middle-aged cop with a paunch and a nightstick in his hand.

"You, troop! Wake up! There's no sleeping in these booths."

"But she said..."

"Yeah, she's a sweetheart." We glanced at the waitress; her back was to us as she made coffee. The

cop went on. "But you're loitering, and I won't have that on my beat. If you wanna wait for a bus, you'll have to do it over there." He pointed to the row of chairs in the open area.

I ached all over just looking at those hard plastic half-shells. "Jeez, Officer. What're you gonna do if I stay here, write me up?"

The cop leaned into my face. "I'll go you one better than that, recruit. I'll take you down to a bunk in our holding cell."

A bed sounded fine, but then I'd miss my bus, and reveille. "Okay, okay, I'm going." I disentangled myself and slouched to the far end of the row of chairs.

On his way out, the cop turned in the door and smacked his nightstick into his open palm. The report of wood on flesh was enough to make me wince. When the bus arrived, I was ready to leave this free-fire zone known as Worcester.

Still, once my tour in 'Nam was over and I came back to the World, I returned. That girl's curves were a road I was bound to travel. The ride didn't last, however; after a while, the journey just got too predictable. And yet I stayed in town, bouncing like a pinball from three-decker to duplex.

And still I stay. Call me perverse, but I guess I've grown attached to this place. See, in my book, I figure Worcester still has my best interests at heart. After all, it cares about where I walk, and it wakes me up to ensure I reach my destination.

The Authors

Paul William Gagnon was born in Worcester and grew up in Northbridge and Spencer. At various points in his life he has been a construction laborer, warehouse worker, big-top tent erector, clerk, emergency medical technician, office administrator, landscaper, president of a non-profit music festival, nighttime manager of a transitional shelter for men, college writing tutor, fireman, volunteer (for many causes both noble and questionable), and the former poetry host at the Moonstruck Café in Charlton. He enjoys backpacking in the wild places, writing, and the feel of the land. In 1994 he walked the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine, a journey of over five months.

His poetry has appeared in *2x4*, *Vox Poetica*, *Worcester Magazine*, *Ursus*, and other places best left unmentioned. He currently lives in Spencer, attends

school at Worcester State College (English, Psychology, and Geography), has two cats, a jeep, one sister, a backpack, a good set of boots and an incessant itch in his hand and heels...

Stacy Serwecki *has a degree in Languages and Literature and in Education. She has been involved in the art world as both a painter and a writer. She has done shows at a number of venues in the northeast; and her work has been seen in galleries, coffee houses, and other artist's groups. She has published poetry in literary and art magazines such as Mother, Lover, Crone.*

Currently, she writes poetry and short stories. In them, she is interested in giving voice to characters and situations that are true to life and help shatter current social mythologies and biases.

Tom Ewart *is fifty-five years old enough to know better and generally doesn't, which is why he writes.*

He is married, and has two daughters. As if this didn't provide him enough grist for his mill, he is also a Vietnam veteran. A displaced Southerner, he has lived in Worcester for over 30 years. It really has been by choice.

Alixa *I have come to the realization that we are but axle trees, waiting to be separated, unknowingly asking for individualism while our wheels keep depending on who we are as a whole.*

Though many have said that my accomplishments surpass my age, I know that my giving will never surpass my wish to give more. It's a constant myoclonic twitch, the way it tends to fall together when time becomes the Van Gogh of existence. Yet I thank the man upstairs and the women in between who drank from my tea and made of me, the painting I walked up to and touched, in times of need.

Tony Brown is a poet and (sometime) musician who performs in the Worcester MA area and beyond. Currently based in Uxbridge, he is a 40 year old with 20+ years of involvement in the Worcester poetry scene. His most recent books include *The Radioactive Artist's Sketchbook* (1998), from which *Conspiracy* is taken, and *Narrow Path, Falling Rock* (2000), both on Doublebunny Press. He was the 1994 first place winner of the Worcester County Poetry Association's annual contest, and was a member of the 1999 Worcester Slam Team that competed at the National Slam Championships in Chicago, IL.

John Eisner is a writer from Leominster, MA. He has a few degrees, a couple of them in English. Some of his poems have been printed in a dozen or more places like *Minnesota Review*, *Worcester Magazine*, *Howling Dog*, *Poetry Motel* and some others you might or might not have heard of. He's also a registered nurse who's working 9 to 5 for the Man.

Joe Fusco Jr. *has written two chapbooks of poetry: The Great Depression and Death and Other Happy Endings. Joe's poems have appeared numerous times in Worcester Magazine as well as the Lancaster Times, Vox Poetica, Writers Exchange, and New Uxbridge Times. He was voted "Best Poet" by the readers of Worcester Magazine in 1999.*

Joe has been the "feature" poet at venues like the Java Hut, Green Rooster Coffeehouse, Coney Island Hot Dog, and Plantation Club in Worcester; The Poet's Parlor in Sturbridge; Moonstruck Café in Charlton; various Barnes and Noble & Borders' bookstores.

Joe Fusco Jr. has been in the supermarket business for thirty years. He and his wife Cyndi live in Worcester with their four children.

Joe also writes songs and performs with the non-musical group The Inflatables. He is a registered Independent voter and loves red meat!

Paul Michael Szlosek *won first prize in the 1998 Landmark Poetry Contest and placed second in the 1999 Worcester Poetry Association Contest. His work has appeared in The Issue, The Sahara, Vox Poetica, and Worcester Magazine. He is also a frequent reader at the various poetry venues through out Worcester County, including The Poet's Parlor in Sturbridge, which he co-founded with Michael A. Johnson in 1995. Paul currently lives in Worcester, MA.*

I am reluctant to classify myself as a poet, since I fear what I write may not be poetry in a classic or academic sense. So I've experimented with various alternative titles such as "Mock Poet" (mock as in "mock" apple pie) or "Free Versifier". Yet the term I find the most accurate is one that I coined myself: a "Cranial Fermentator" which describes my writing process perfectly. Stray thoughts, weird observations, bits of popular culture and obscure knowledge mixes together in my brain, ferments for weeks and months until the pressure builds and the resulting concoction overflows onto the written page.

Frank "Pasquale" Caricchio, a motorcycle aficionado since 1968, rides a Harley-Davidson, writes poetry and narrative vignettes. His work has been published in *The Umbrella and Worcester County Poetry Association's The Issue*.

An inner-city Worcester kid, he didn't have far to go when he found himself at the Y-Not Coffee House then at 'Congress Alley', the 67-68 Worcester artists community. Besides being a writer, he is a self described "slave to the two wheel iron horse". He worked in human services from '63 to '91 and later as a metal worker. Steve Martin, singer/song writer and former member of the nationally known group ORPHEUS, described Pasquale as a Romantic Idealist which was evident in his writings at the time and is most evident today.

Chris Mellen has been reading in the local area for about 10 years, but has been writing since she could hold a pen. She lives in Worcester, MA with a loving husband and six wonderful cats. She is a member of

the Poet's Parlor in Sturbridge, MA, and one of her poems was recently published in The Issue, a collection of local poetry published by the Worcester County Poetry Association.

bill macmillan *is a Worcester poet. He is the founder of the Worcester Poets' Asylum and Worcester Poetry Slam. He was a member of the National Poetry Slam championship team from Providence. He was voted Most Popular Solo Performer at the 1996 Austin International Poetry Festival. He lives in Worcester with his wife and son. He hates writing in the third person.*

e.v.maldonado *was born and incubated on the isle of manhattan... his heart remains across the williamsburg bridge- brooklyn... the wilderness of trees and skyscrapers have been his teachers, and biographies are specifics of label... poet is appropriate if music is heard... right now the sounds come out of worcester... and they are intended to be collective, not cult, just tribe.*

Lynn Anderson *is the Editor of the local literary magazine Vox Poetica. "I'm writing the second draft of my first novel and dream of words in my sleep. Perhaps they will write themselves across the summer sky."*

Ken McQuillan - *aspiring philosopher poet; sellout; a ball waiting in line to be rolled down the hill towards enlightenment; failed Catholic; hopeful misanthrope; holds the record as the worst poet who's ever been published; half-breed.*

Mike Duffy "Worcester native-born and raised songwriter/singer - the quote I like to use is: "If I hadn't worked construction for 24 years, all my songs would have been instrumentals"

"Whatever possessed you to write those songs? I'm glad you wrote'em and not me". Townes Van Zandt

was included on a compilation cassette /cd
1994- Martha's Vineyard Singer/Songwriter Retreat -
cd is called "Love Keep Us Together"

my song "...Guys I Work With" was recorded
live

- in fact, it was the 1st time I ever performed it live

1999 - my cd "...destined to be a rumor" (Tim Mason's quote became my title)

2000 - *The Best of Boston Singer/Songwriter Showcase* - a compilation of songwriters/performers - my song *Camouflage* is included

ps : "I love being from Worcester"

Todd Deal Sherman was born in Worcester with a small hole in his heart. He searched his crumbling post industrial surroundings, the empty factory buildings, the scrap metal yards and the cemeteries...the abandoned airplane hangars and soup kitchens of Columbus, Ohio. He looked through the penthouse glass and floated down the gutters of New York City. He slept in the Catskills in Rip Van Winkle's lap. He searched along the riverbanks of West Virginia,...all to try to stop the life from leaking out. A beat not yet beaten. Back roosting in his hometown he writes and waits....

Michel Duncan Merle was born in Paris, lived the Bohemian life as a child at his grandparent's Akedemica Raymond Duncan. After the not-so-great war he and his brother followed their mother to the USA, learned English and was allowed to play outdoors with the neighborhood kids for once. After high school in Tucson he worked at a Swiss Bank on Wall Street that is now accused of money laundering; "There was no hanky-pankey when I worked there!"

he asserts. After a degree in Anthropology from Columbia he served two years in the Army spending most of the time cleaning bed pans. After an MFA in painting (in Mexico) he eventually landed on Worcester's shores and has been teaching art at Worcester State College ever since.

Listen every Thursday night at 9:30 to Think Tank Tango on WCUW 91.3 FM. Call him, he'll tell you he's very thankful to Dave Nader for having done this thing.

Corrina Bain is a visual and literary artist who makes her home in Worcester. She performs at spoken-word venues around New England where she is respected as a writer and dramatic performer. Younger than most people in this field, she rises to a level of excellence which makes her a force to be reckoned with on the competitive Slam scene. Corrina exudes a warmth and quality in the context of a 'Goth' style that sets her apart from others who hail from this land of darkness.

Michael Jackman, a.k.a. Gitch, was the astrologer in residence for the Congress Alley community and Worcester's underground newspaper PUNCH. His writings have appeared in WORCESTER MAGAZINE, gay publications in Boston and in the South. He is best known as a polylinguist who has taught languages at the secondary school level. His current interest in Syrian Orthodox Christianity has led him to the sacred language, Aramaic. His lifestyle is one of simple elegance.

Lynne G. Redan *is a local girl with local color, and a little extra flare picked up at the many roadside attractions dotting her gypsy-like existence; an angel caught in mid-fall.*

Joel Moore (1949-1999) *grew up in Westboro MA, bounced between Massachusetts, Indiana and California during his adult life. Joel was involved with various artistic mediums including illustration, photography, Community Radio programing and writing. He was most prolific as a writer the last 8 years of his life. Joel lived a life of authenticity, practicing what he believed in a most uncompromising manor.*

Francis 'Woody' Wodbridge Jr., *graduated from Newton High School and spent three years in the United States Army. After being separated from active duty he attended Clark University where he was involved in radical politics and gravitated to the folk scene at The Y-Not Coffee House. Woody joined in*

with the Congress Alley community where he became known for his poetry. In the early 1970s he was involved in the Worcester County Poetry Association and most recently published his work in the local literary journal The Sahara. After living in the Northampton area for 20 years Woody relocated to Worcester where he is a regular at spoken word venues. Woody's courage and determination in the face of personal hardships has made him a source of inspiration to this nationally recognized poetry community.

Carle Johnson of Leicester is a retired high school English teacher who taught English for 25 years at Worcester Vocational High School. A member of the Worcester County Poetry Association Board of Directors since 1975, vice president, 1980-1983, and was president from February, 1983, to February of 1985, founding editor of the WCPA's Poetry Newsletter, Executive director of the Stanley Kunitz Poetry Festival, Executive Director of the Elizabeth Bishop Conference and Poetry Festival, an editor of the WCPA's *The Worcester Review*. Published in *The*

Issue, Shadowgraph, WoMag, The Worcester Review, etc.

David Nader writes, performs and publishes urban folk tales. His work is 'tied to place' but reflects what is happening nationally. The stories and short prose poems celebrate the everyday experiences and situations which make up the fabric of what we call culture and history. These works entertain, as some traditional folk tales do, by questioning our official myths with unofficial responses. He suggests that the ordinary is where you may find what is truly valuable.

His compilation, The Wayside Pulpit: urban folk tales, in the Worcester Public Library and the Harvard College Library in Cambridge, MA. was made possible in part by a grant from the Worcester Cultural Commission. In 1999 he published Congress Alley, a tribute to Worcester's first intentional community based on an artistic ethos. His work is also found in the local literary publications, Vox

*Poetica and Worcester County Poetry Association's
The Issue. BatCity Press, his independent small
press publishing concern is putting out works not
usually available to the general public.*