

## **Doug Holder**– Three Poems



### **Feature Poet**

### **The Dance**

We peel away  
and return--  
hand to hand  
cheek to cheek  
the brush of hair  
our intimate scents  
the curve of the back  
the boastful breasts.

We peel away  
a lonely silhouette  
with stark white  
ballet legs.  
Our hands reach out  
to the air  
the need to touch  
for there  
to be there.

Once again  
we will return  
to the momentary embrace  
the clutch of arms  
that time  
that space  
the wisp  
of a smile  
on her face.  
We peel and return  
flowers on  
an infinite  
ballroom space.

## A Twisted Tree

\* Based on a Chinese proverb.

A twisted tree  
will never  
become a plank  
we let it  
live its life  
because of  
its fortunate  
deformity.

It doesn't  
accept  
the straight and  
narrow  
the confines  
of linear  
and symmetry  
the castrating walls  
of some  
form fitting  
box.

In its way  
it is sly as a fox  
its veins  
boastfully bulge--  
it has no apologies  
for the tumorous eruptions  
on its trunk.

Tied in knots  
but without  
the requisite pain  
it does not  
complain.

In the end  
we admire  
its ugly  
beauty.

The twisted tree  
has done its duty.

## Manida Street Bronx 1962

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As a seven-year-old boy I visited my grandparents on Manida Street in the Bronx. Now, I hear it is a historical district. It was a magical place for me back then. In my career as a poet, I have written a number of poems about the Bronx.

As a boy  
I viewed it  
as magic  
far  
from the antiseptic  
of the Long Island  
suburbs.

Yes  
horse carts  
still on the  
street  
the croon  
from the vendors,

"get your tomatahs  
for your tomatah!"

And with my grandmother  
the butcher  
wrapped in white  
a freshly butchered  
limp whole chicken  
looking  
for all the world  
like some comic  
prop  
in a burlesque  
comedian's bag.

My grandmother  
told me  
a chicken lived  
a whole week  
with his cut off  
I loved her..  
I believed  
her.

At night you  
would hear  
the occasional  
cry from the  
girl's reform school  
across the street.

I would sneak down  
to our tenement basement  
to an ancient, defunct  
nightclub  
wrapped my self  
in a spaghetti of confetti  
and looked at the empty  
whiskey bottles  
the dusty elegance  
of cocktail glasses.  
Imagining  
the Prohibition  
revelers  
all that booze  
and bombast.

Such ghosts.

I prayed  
I would  
never have  
to leave.

**Doug Holder** is the founder of the Ibbetson Street Press. His work has appeared in the *Worcester Review*, *Pendemics*, *Lips*, *Rattle*, *The Cafe Review*, *Caesura*, and many others. Holder teaches writing at Endicott College in Beverly, MA. The "Doug Holder Papers Collection" resides at the University at Buffalo. Holder ran poetry workshops at Mclean Hospital for psychiatric patients for over 30 years.