

# Doug Holder

## The Mall

\*\*\* Dedicated to Sheree Pollock

Oh!--painted ladies  
Oh!- cosmetic ladies  
offer me a make-over  
give me the stiff  
mask of Botox creams  
give me that elixir  
that will fix her  
a fragrant mist  
that will make  
her an enigma  
in black  
once again.

Smile at me  
with the cakes  
of makeup  
cracking like  
fault lines  
on your face.

Mannequins!  
you are so stilted  
frozen in the midst  
of some action  
that will not  
bear fruit.

Give me the polo shirt  
you wear  
on your hardened torso  
I want its neat perfection  
no loose ends  
nothing frayed.

Oh!--food court  
with your gaggle  
of teenagers  
doing the twist  
with their fingers

on their cell phones  
their fast, breathless chatter  
their food  
twisted, breaded  
creatures  
that emerge  
dripping with decadence  
from the depth  
of a deep fryer.

I try to transcend it all  
on the escalator  
but the mall bitch slaps me  
with an onslaught of brands  
the sale, the discount  
and finally  
the clearance.

The green-haired  
the pink-haired  
nostrils flaring  
with nose rings  
they try to go  
against this grain  
but they plaster  
the plastic floors  
of Newbury comics.

And back at the food court  
the old lady flashed a senile smile  
at the sizzle of the neon  
and the approaching  
night.

**Doug Holder** is the founder of the Ibbetson Street Press, co-founder of The Somerville News Writers Festival, director of the Newton Free Library Poetry series, teaches writing at Bunker Hill Community College in Boston, and Endicott College in Beverly, MA. Holder has also led poetry groups for psychiatric patients at McLean Hospital for over 30 years and was the recipient of the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Award for community service from the Newton Writing and Publishing Center. (2015). Holder's own work has appeared in the *Woven Tale Press*, *sPoke*, *Caesura*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Endicott Review*, *Rattle*, and elsewhere...