

# Mapping Worcester in Poetry News, March 2025

<https://worcestercountypoetry.org/mapping-worcester-in-poetry/>

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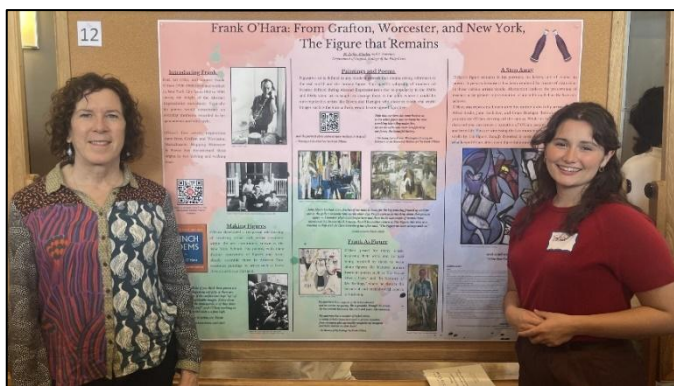
Here's the latest news about **Mapping Worcester in Poetry**, an initiative funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (through Scholarship in Action at Holy Cross) and directed by Susan Elizabeth “Beth” Sweeney, with the Worcester County Poetry Association as community partner and Katherine Gregoire as liaison with the WCPA. **MWiP** identifies, documents, and marks sites related to some of the city's best-known poets—including Stanley Kunitz, Elizabeth Bishop, Charles Olson, Frank O'Hara, Etheridge Knight, Mary Fell, and Chris Gilbert—while nurturing brand-new poetry about places in Worcester and Central Massachusetts.

## MWiP Project Update

In fall 2024, Beth worked with two other student research associates, Madeleine “Tessa” Zafón-Whalen and Anna Claire Pruitt, who identified places and objects mentioned in poems; profiled neighborhoods; and documented poetry organizations and venues for “The Poem Next Door,” a collaborative exhibit with the Worcester Historical Museum that opens in May 2025. We acquired an official MWiP “feather” and redesigned our [webpage](#). In 2024, the project was featured in the *Holy Cross Magazine*, *Worcester Magazine*, and *The Spire*. Pictured from left: associates Anahi Paulino Rumaldo '27, Anna Claire Pruitt '26, Beth, Ava Marenna '26, and Tessa Zafón-Whalen '26; absent: Katie Knippler '22.



## Frank O'Hara and the Human Figure



Tessa Zafón-Whalen won a grant in summer 2024 to work for MWiP on two virtual, driving, and walking tours devoted to O'Hara—[one in Grafton](#), one in downtown Worcester—and to conduct archival research at UConn and the Museum of Modern Art. With Beth's help, she compared traces of people in O'Hara's poems to abstract expressionists' depictions of human figures. Tessa's research was [profiled](#) in *Holy Cross Magazine*. Pictured: Beth and Tessa with her poster at the Summer Research Symposium.

## “Across the Mutual Landscape”: Feature Section in the Fall 2024 *Worcester Review*

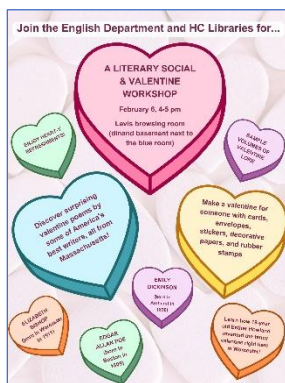
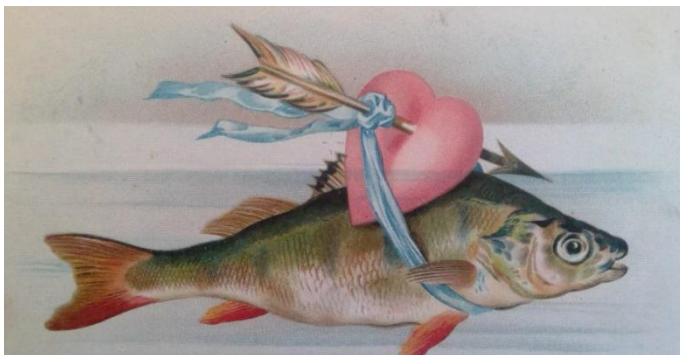
MWiP's major accomplishment in 2024 was a feature section of the *Worcester Review*, edited by Susan Elizabeth Sweeney, that explores how poems about shared spaces in our city can connect us across the



generations. It focuses on six Worcester poets whose work evokes interiority, geography, urban environments, and movement through space: Kunitz, Olson, Bishop, O’Hara, Fell, and Gilbert. The feature section includes seven scholarly essays on their spatial poetics; seven new poems, mostly from entries to MWiP’s “Poems in and out of Places” contest, about locations related to these writers; and historic photos of sites mentioned in the poems. As an additional bonus, “Across the Mutual Landscape” offers a new poem by Fell and an interview with her. *Pictured:* Covering the Blackstone River canal on Green Street, 1895-1905; courtesy, Worcester Historical Museum.

### Elizabeth Bishop Graveside Readings

MWiP hosted two annual readings at Bishop’s grave in Hope Cemetery. At our birthday celebration on February 7—this year titled “Elizabeth Bishop’s Love Poems & Valentines”—a dozen local poets performed her dry, sardonic valentines and tender, intimate love poems, many unpublished during her lifetime. Learn more [here](#). At our memorial reading on October 11—“Elizabeth Bishop: Paintings in Poems”—readers shared her poems about drawings, paintings, or scenes sketched with a painter’s eye.



### Literary Social and Valentine Workshop

On February 6, 2024, at Holy Cross’s Dinand Library, Susan Elizabeth Sweeney spoke about the history of the American valentine (including the pivotal role played by Esther Howland of Worcester) and its significance for Massachusetts poets, especially Boston-born Edgar Allan Poe, Amherst native Emily Dickinson, and Worcester’s own Elizabeth Bishop. Afterwards, the participants crafted their own valentines.

This event was cosponsored with Holy Cross Libraries and the Holy Cross English Department. Learn more about it [here](#).

### Opening Reception: *Correspondence (for Elizabeth Bishop)*

On October 4, 2024, Elizabeth Bacon, Beth, and Heather Treseler represented MWiP and WCPA at the opening reception for the installation of Crystalle Lacouture’s new wall painting, *Correspondence (for Elizabeth Bishop)* at the Worcester Art Museum. *Pictured:* We had the best view of Lacouture’s painting in the entire building from our display table on the second-floor balcony!

