

Seattle City Council

Culture, Civil Rights, Health, and Personnel Committee Meeting

Wednesday, 2:00 PM, January 23rd, 2008

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **John Burgess**

Today's poet is **John Burgess**

John Burgess grew up in upstate New York, worked on a survey crew in Montana and taught English in Japan. He now works 9 to 5 in corporate communications for PEMCO Insurance in Seattle and rides the bus to work everyday.

His poems have appeared in the King County *Poetry on Buses* project, *Sidecar Anemone*, *Cranky*, *Pontoon*, *elimae* and *Chrysanthemum* among others. He's a 2006 Jack Straw writer and co-founder of the Washington Poets Association's Burning Word Festival. He was nominated twice for Seattle Poet Populist. He's currently the editor of *Snow Monkey*, an online literary journal.

He's been a featured reader at bookstores, art galleries and coffee shops up and down the West Coast from San Francisco to Vancouver, B.C.

His first book is *Punk Poems* (2005) from Ravenna Press, who will publish his second collection, *A History of Guns in the Family*, in April 2008.

from AURORA BRIDGE

by John Burgess

01

This is a worker's bridge
decked out in steel. Swagger
of 5 o'clock quitting time. Sweat
of work-today paid-todays
splattered with paint or plaster.
5 o'clock shadows carry
burdens on narrow shoulders
suspended thru a concrete sky.
(Headphone beats.) Long-gone
workers of Pacific Bridge Co.

02

of Portland “driving cofferdams ...
excavating a lake bottom ... driving
piles each timber 110 to 120 feet
long” into clay deep mud of Lake
Union according to Jacobs & Ober
plans. (Productivity takes forgetting
a turning to mindless.) 5 o’clock
joy of done for the day rushing
home or rushing out on
the happy-hour town. Or

03

tired eyes shut. Workdays
set up in guts like pilings
driven into soft mud. 5 o’clock
longshoreman looks out window
dreams of a view of someday
something other than cement
guardrails perhaps water
or mountains instead of
infinite rush of taillights
streaking red into eternity.

-- end --