

Seattle City Council

Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Arts Committee Meeting

Friday, 2PM, February 15, 2005

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Anna Maria Hong & Grant Cogswell**

Today's Curator is Anna Maria Hong and her poet is **Jeannette Allée**

Jeannette Allée is the winner of the 2004 Richard Hugo House New Works competition. She has published in the US and UK including the Ian St. James Awards for fiction, the Portlandia Review of Books, and forthcoming in The Spoon River Poetry Review. Additionally, she has performed unconventional social critique at On the Boards and in numerous NW festivals as "The Warm-Up Comedian in the House of Love."

Oranj Symphonette: Exalt

after Anne Michaels

by Jeannette Allée

*Split the Lark--find the
Music--*

Emily Dickinson

Mangoes drop softly from the tree outside my bedroom window all night long.
Each muted thud, the sound of a body fallen.

Every minute this world is busting at its seams with bounty,
fruited with ripe imperfection that hollers partake or lay waste.
Blood oranges, prickled rambutan, the park drunk rises up from his bench to
exclaim,
"I prayed that God would put his forcefield on me. 'Learn from the ants,'
he said,
'grain by grain.'" The mad know to boom louder when arrested for serenading
the sun.
While you hide under cloud cover, downed by the gravitational pull of the
bed.

I compose this note in full stride, fleet towards the hill where I open my

coat to the wind
like an 8 year-old, I feel I could fly. I won't be drawn into your sunken
world,
saturated with the sadness of a mildewed past. Why was it you thought
the grass was always greener on the next-to-the-other side?

Letters should be less written. Life should be more taken
by the scruff of the neck, playfully jawed.
Set down, nuzzled, chased around.
Sugar in the blood: the clean sap of sapience.
I'm not ashamed to say I sleep solid now, arms raised, hands tucked up under
my head at night
like a boy lazing on a riverbank. I awaken to the call of the copper-bottom
frying pan.
Eggs. Sausage. Kettle for coffee. I sup hearty now.

Everyone agreed you're a rare intellectual--I know I disappointed you with
my too-open mind,
puny vocabulary, degree from a public university, these C-student lines.
We laughed about living in this drizzly city. "It's thinking person's
weather," you'd said
but the thought you shot me when summer hit and I donned sandals and
shorts--
as if bare skin to the air were somehow pornographic--You so feared warmth.
May was an annual affront.
Night after night, your hands as cold as a florist's, pushed me away.

Now I stand at the sink washing chicken
its fragile shoulders, podgy body; the heft of a baby boy.
Don't you know men leave their wives when they've imagined too many times
their lips rubbed raw from the babysitter's braces on the drive home?

Is springtime abuzz with pollen not just for bee brethren
but the drowsing of humans, to send us to bed,
to shoot our seeds in dark, stem-unfurling dreams?
Is the handkerchief not grateful to the sneeze?
Is the ache of give and take not inherent in all things?

Honeypie, it's April, all along the avenues daffodils and young men in
Matrix dresses are out.
Please say you'll notice their skirts are like bells--not linger on the
boys' mauve acne scars.
Please say you'll split the lark to find Oranj Symphonette playing Henry
Mancini
--not a mute hive of maggots dining.
Please say you'll partake of this sun-drenched, floodlit, ripe-for-loving

world.

Look--just now, across town--college kids lean out from a dorm window,
lowering a wig, from a fishing pole
onto the unsuspecting head
of a passer-by
below.

Exalt.

-- *End* --