

Seattle City Council

Culture, Civil Rights, Health and Personnel Committee Meeting

2:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 12th, 2009

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Felicia Gonzalez**

Today's poet is **Anna Bálint**

Anna Bálint is the author of "Horse Thief," a collection of short fiction, (Curbstone 2004), as well as two earlier books of poetry: "Out of the Box" and "spread them crimsonsleeves like wings." In the wake of 9/11 she organized "Evidence of Compassion: A Reading of Middle Eastern & Central Asian Poetry and Literature" and co-edited "Poets Against the War," an anthology of poems protesting the Gulf War, 1991. Her own poems and stories have been published in numerous journals and magazines including Calyx, Briar Cliff Review, Raven Chronicles, Clackamas Literary Review, Stringtown, and Knock. In 2001, she received the Starbucks Leading Voices award for outstanding work with urban youth in the field of creative writing. She currently teaches at Antioch University and Richard Hugo House in Seattle.

Sinning (Again)

by Anna Bálint

The kettle shrieks,
the clothes drier screams,
cats wrap about my legs
with plaintive meows,
plants hang out their leaves
like parched tongues
and abandoned dishes
stare up from the sink
with oily eyes:
all this while I play god.

With my smarts I could
have been a secretary,

top notch, efficient,
long fingernails clicking
over a keyboard,
could have snagged
a real check, real benefits,
medical and dental.
Old voices repeat this, religiously,
a message running circles
inside my head.

I listen instead to the radio
playing noon-time jazz,
a gold-throated trumpet
soaring to celestial high notes,
as I turn my back to the kitchen
(and the rest of it)
and let temptation lead me on
to where my own private Eden
is gloriously spread
on the dining table.
Clumps of clay, water, sponges,
Q-tips, pins, kitchen knives,
and in the midst of it all
a half-formed figure,
eighteen inches high, pedastalled,
on what used to be my best
maple wood cutting board.

I, the creator,
am mucking about with clay.
Grey, moist, and primordial,
it moves like flesh, muscles
appearing like miracles,
my hands shaping my own Eve,
her clay head tossed proudly back,
her round-bellied, ripe self
dancing into life without an Adam
while I, that first Eve's
unrepentant descendant,
chuckle, and say:
*this is only the beginning
and it is good. Behold!
It is very good.*

-- end --