

## "Words' Worth" Poetry Readings

Poets at the Culture, Arts, and Parks Committee of the Seattle City Council.

### **To Marilyn Monroe Whose Favorite Color Was White** by Madeline Defrees

When you wriggled onto the silver screen, Marilyn--  
honey blonde or platinum--I was a nun. I  
found you too late in your satin sleep. Now, three  
decades past, I grieve from that ancient  
cloister, the alabaster body, my beautiful buried  
sister. Convent movies had to be clean as  
bleach. Even your titles  
went wrong: All About Eve.  
The Seven Year Itch. The Asphalt Jungle.  
Some Like It Hot. How to Marry a Millionaire.  
Sex was a bullet I dodged, that shot on the subway  
grate! Skirts lifted to seventh  
heaven, you scared me all right, as you scared your  
jealous husband.  
Yet Joe was your friend in the end  
as I hope to be. Bride at sixteen like you, given  
another name, I was cast with the world's invisible  
millionaire. We didn't know who we were,  
Norma Jeane, too young to care. Even now I imagine  
you posed--a pin-up everywhere woman who did it  
for 50 dollars. I resent  
the photographer smirking  
away with the loot: the generous milky  
breasts and bottom, pout of a wounded child. Too bad  
the bad life fate guaranteed you:  
dashing absent father, unmarried mother who  
had to be locked away. Say cheese, Marilyn. Open  
those pearly gates,  
come back with me to my former  
marmoreal splendor: the lily-pad I escaped  
that was never my passion. Ivory walls, skulls in  
our heads all day. Snowy sheets and colorless  
towels. Chaste linens framing the parchment faces.  
It was color I missed most of all,  
white sister. I hated the pallor. I want you to play  
this part over. I want to barge in as your crazy  
mother stealing the scene: capsules  
washed down the drain in a lethal river. The beauty  
startled awake in the last act from that  
white sleep history promised.

This page was last updated: January 8, 2000