

Seattle City Council

Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Arts Committee Meeting

Tuesday, 2PM, February 1st, 2005

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

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

Today's Curator is Grant Cogswell and his poet is **Mary Whitechester**

Mary Whitechester started writing in 1996. She took classes from Ed Harkness at Shoreline Community College. Mary's learned that while writing poetry may be one of the hardest things she's has ever done, "nothing gives as much freedom or completeness to my soul." She thinks of writing as a gift to the poet. Also, she looks forward to working with Grant because, "he's great."

Leave-taking

By Mary Whitechester

In the flaxen slant of light she leaves
for good down a quiet road.
Cruel she should travel alone, given
it all. Futile doctors;
the pleasant helpless social worker.
Dementia medication that worked
for awhile
Occupational therapy given to hands like birds
already flown away.
Daughters with collapsed faces. The
journey that begins when one falls in
on oneself. Setting out with meticulous
steps, she tilts her head to hear
the junco's twilight call. Her back
is small, and set
for the dark ahead-
for disappearing.

The Farmhouse

By Mary Whitechester

Lightening strikes the old wooden shed

Which groans, resigned to its slow
trip toward the earth and oblivion.
Spiney-tufted field greases ignite
through the hollow and over a rise
to who knows where. Inside
a white farmhouse the woman slides
her thick-crustied pie onto the
windowsill. She glances
out the window, touches a fingertip
to the glass. Perhaps this year
the grassfire will not threaten
the white house, the innocent barn.
She faces the window, one more
person staking her life on the skin
of this earth.

Collateral Patriotism

By Mary Whitechester

The old woman resembles fire-
wood. Her left arm is extended
forever, bent at the elbow.
One finger points vacantly, but
where are the accused?
Her body has been
transformed into brown
Wooden sinew, by some
bomb or abomination.

Five feet away a
baby rests, covered
with dirt and weeds.
His dead eyes are open –
Fledgling out of the nest –
four of his fingers
Are missing. One
small leg is bent
behind his back.
Fire-bomb
Missile
Torched village
Which terror?

In lofty carpeted rooms
decisions are vomited out
that will turn human beings

into wood. A piece of cloth
waves from a stick. We go
deadly blind.

- *end* -