

Seattle City Council

**Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Arts Committee Meeting**

Tuesday, 2PM, May 17, 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 **T. Hetzel**

**T. Hetzel** has lived in Seattle on one hill since February 3, 1993. She is going to grad school in Michigan in the fall.

**Ideas About Luck**

T. Hetzel

I am not an American Indian. Jim Welch, Blackfeet, carried a touchstone in his pocket every day, his widow Lois said. She brought it to his wake. We invited friends and the public; the stone was put behind glass. It is worn away by his rubs for luck and his touches without thought. I cannot tell what the figure used to be. Maybe a badger? I cannot see the spirit inside it. It could have been a bull. Or something indigenous to Montana. Or something unrelated like a kitten or a sea turtle. Made of slate or stone.

Even though I'm rather disconnected from the earth, I have ideas about luck and what makes things tick. I carried in my wallet for two years a squashed US penny, a gift or token. No train. No broken tooth or steel mallet. No presidential profile. The coin was crushed mechanically in a tourist lobby near Mount St Helen's in Washington state. A citizen could destroy legal tender with a crank of a gear for 51 cents. The penny became an oblong and flat talisman with a new image: Mount St Helen's erupting on May 18, 1980.

In September I finally took the Mount St Helen's penny out of the coin purse. Two weeks later the volcano began to rumble and steam. There were earthquakes. Johnston Ridge look-out was closed; the trails and roads were cleared of hikers and visitors. Scientists and photographers were allowed but documented. The penny is not connected to the mountain. This heart is not connected to that heart. Jim Welch's touchstone changed nothing in his life.

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