

Seattle City Council

Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Arts Committee Meeting  
Friday, 2PM, July 8, 2005

**Words' Worth**

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Anna Maria Hong**

Today's poet is **Martha Silano**.

Martha Silano received her BA from Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa and began studying poetry with David Wagoner and Heather McHugh at the UW, where she received her MFA in 1993. Her first book, *What the Truth Tastes Like*, won the William & Kingman Page Poetry Book Award and was published in 1999 by Nightshade Press. She's had poems in the *Paris Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, and on *Poetry Daily*, among others, and has work forthcoming in the Contemporary Northwest Poets anthology. Her unpublished 2<sup>nd</sup> manuscript has been a National Poetry Series finalist. She has received funding from the Seattle Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs and has been nominated twice for a Pushcart prize. Martha teaches English at Edmonds and Bellevue Community Colleges and as a mentor through the Scribes program at Seattle's Richard Hugo House.

**My Newborn's**

by Martha Silano

diurnal, definitely diurnal,  
with no interest in the phases

of the moon, in the nocturnally  
lucent night blooming cereus.

She's attentive, very attentive,  
to the richness of seeds,

to miscommunications, confusing  
what's eaten with butter and jam

with "cat fight" (*crepe chignon*), attuned  
to the tricks of jewelweed. She's

most capable of metamorphosis,  
as are ladles, swing sets, spathes.

In relation to me she's always skyward,  
skyward like the popcorn flower and the trillium.

Her tongue, both tibias, hail from the era  
of Rosie the Riveter, women named Garnet

and Hazel. She's fire, all fire, but also  
tending toward cymose, cymose and lacy,

most fashionably a relative  
of the crepuscular thick-knees. To be

beautiful on a dissecting table,  
all she needs is a dung-rolling scarab

pinned to her pink and white onesie:  
her gait will be my gait.

### **His Favorite Color is Green**

by Martha Silano

All shades all permutations  
of say the shiny glabrous stem  
of a shooting-out-from-winter daffodil  
of Astroturf like just-before-blooming phlox

the long-&-narrow-little-or-large-town street sign  
the big square Missoula Sioux City Throgsneck Bridge  
along the freeway with horsetail astragalus vetch

the Libyan flag whipping over one point oh  
three percent arable land  
shimmer of mallard's head

or lighter . . . the under-ripe fruit  
he does his best to enjoy  
olivaceousness of kinglets  
mama calliope warming her eggs  
those clusters that fall in April or May  
from Norway maples onto sidewalks  
we stroller past  
custard of scooped out avocado

or dark as say its skin . . . seaweed hemlock

dinosaur kale . . .picnic tables of city parks

The vegetables he hates  
The garbage trucks he loves

The semi-spicate the glume-ful the spikelike the membranous  
The shallowly bifid the twisted the sticky the hollow  
The most common & palatable known  
from near Corvallis from near Boise  
Whorlwort Beckmannia False Brome

His world's frondy  
Maidenhair gone haywire  
His world's licorice wet (also deer & lady)  
His world's hickory buckeye slippery elm

I kneel to find him something emerald  
something emerald & squiggly

I hardly knew him that first spring he fit in a playground swing  
ratcheting a metal bar along a chain  
down & down till it fit

So much of his world so much of this world  
even where plowed where fires even in cities  
a hispid persistence

I wanted him to come along but he wouldn't  
I wanted him to hurry  
I needed to tell him what Horace said  
about the goddess Envy  
("leave no offerings")

Piles of clippings giant piles of invasive ivy  
the neighbor's ghost-shaped shrubs harmless giants  
while he sings his crocodile song

- end -