

Seattle City Council

Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Arts Committee Meeting  
Tuesday, 2 P.M., December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2005

**Words' Worth**

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Anna Maria Hong**

Today's poet is **Anna Maria Hong**

Anna Maria Hong is the founder and producer of The Po Show and Trapdoor 62 ([www.trapdoor62.org](http://www.trapdoor62.org)). Her poems have been published in Hotel Amerika, Fence, Puerto del Sol, Crab Orchard Review, Golden Handcuffs Review, Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review, Gargoyle Magazine, and Cranky Literary Journal. Her first poetry manuscript was a finalist in the 2005 National Poetry Series Open Book Competition and the 2005 Tupelo Press First Book Awards. A recent Pushcart Prize nominee, Hong has received grants from the Artist Trust and the A Room of Her Own Foundation and was named One to Watch by The Stranger Genius Awards. She holds a BA in Philosophy from Yale University and an MFA in Poetry and Fiction from the University of Texas Michener Center for Writers. Her reviews and interviews appear in Poets & Writers, The Austin Chronicle, The International Examiner, and other publications. In the past year, she has done readings, lectures, and collaborative events at venues including the Center on Contemporary Art, the Experience Music Project, the Microsoft Art Gallery, Theater Schmeater, and the Texas State Capitol. Ms. Hong is the editor of Growing Up Asian American, an anthology of fiction and memoir.

**Bon Moit**

*for Heather McHugh*

by Anna Maria Hong

Lo. The name is Arabella. It is morning in Kesung,  
calm as a throng. The nightingale pierces thirteen rings.  
One could say they ever widen,  
but that is a false memory.  
False as the plains of Aarhus are flat.

Li. The ginseng stirs beneath its dirt cap. Call me Arabel.  
I've worked this plane before. My hands shake  
the fingers of the bonsai root.

I pack a yellow spade upon my right hip.

The color of orphans trapped at the root.  
Golden glock, my solitaria. Ta da da da.  
It pulls dreams to the window. Other people's dreams.  
They will moisten the pane to the point  
of understanding.

Because I am Arabella. I can parse a phanerogam.  
Which blooms in Terlingua. Have you been?  
Good. Now, answer me in ottava rima  
and pass me that box.

I am Arabella. Drupaceous as a mouth.  
I am in the bath, wrapped in black leaves.  
My indolence will wash the stems from the leaves.  
Together, we will brew a human tea.

### **Cin City**

by Anna Maria Hong

In the dumb kingdom of fear and trembling,  
the person with the see-through slipper knew  
enough to split before the other one  
dropped. Step and carry, bitter and better,

the girl with the slipper knew better than  
to carry on as if all shoes were fit  
to be tried. Split-splat, the girl was violet  
in a realm of mimic green. *Tremble and spot,*

*better to have tied myself in knots,*  
thought the girl with the one good shoe. Slip her  
a bitter, the person with the see-through  
boot renamed the kingdom "fear" after her

most beloved shade of green. The good spot  
split, as if immaculate, and slipped into an amble thing.

### **Champion Under Wood**

*for Dean Taylor*

by Anna Maria Hong

"Ma beauté, some men are continents, others,  
trinkets." So said some French philosopher  
or would have said, if he weren't so sexist,

but let's turn to our friend the novelist,

who'd already forgotten every aspect  
of *Fear and Trembling* except for that bit  
about the Merman—how Danish, how  
totally Hans Christian. Half-fish. You

know the type, and in the particular  
scene she was drafting, someone would vanish.  
She knew that much about drift and finish.  
Tapping like a casket, she alone was the boss of her,

and that book would be her most cherished to date.  
“Some summer,” she wrote. She was thirty-eight.

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