

## "Words' Worth" Poetry Readings

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

### **Hollow Streets** by Michael Hood

My kid's name is Milo and he's 10  
like me he's a small town boy with a taste for city lowlife.  
Weekends when Milo comes to town  
we hang the alleys and the derelict streets  
windowshopping for lives we'd hate  
we're drawn by the sheer lack of sheen  
and scuffed desperation  
we watch with eyes in the deadlight  
as the souls w/no sox  
wearin' their homes on their feet  
pissin' their pants to stay warm  
livin' in the tunnel at the end of the light...  
askin' blessings from nothin'  
they shuffle though the empties  
in wind like broken glass...  
This is our Disneyland when Milo comes to town  
we're tourists slumming  
dazzled by degradation...

It was a winter Sunday gray in the financial district  
The dregs of the dregs were there  
and women with faces in blood  
and men named Lightnin'  
and they were and we were  
the only animals to be found there in the canyonlands  
The cement void left by the bankers and the paper pimps  
rolled off Friday afternoon in their top sirloin cars...  
And it was dreadful silent  
Except for the moans of the wounded  
from the Indian camp up on Jackson Street.  
hollow streets empty even when full  
of these so-called human beings.

Look, Milo, his eyes are holes like a skull's!  
Cool, says Milo.

At a bustop, clothes dumped on the ground  
shaving kit all speckled with toothpaste residue  
Milo looks but there's nothing to have here for a boy...

STOP, I say. This is the end of a life.  
No man leaves his shaving gear & his extra pair of pants  
on the street if he intends to live.  
This is a grave, Milo.  
These things are useless to you--  
But this is a homelife, scattered and stomped.  
These are personal effects, impersonal and ineffective  
like a pile of dentures in a holocaust camp  
stripped of their gold and rifled by children  
This man is dead, Milo.

And seein' his underwear on the street  
we're knowin' him better than anyone has in years  
And I regret ever meeting him  
I'm sorry my son was exposed to his lack  
my son was exposed to namelessness  
I'm sorry my son was exposed.  
I'm sorry my son  
for this looted life  
like dogs with no names  
for effects with no cause  
to lives that end where weekends begin...  
And I repent what I own!  
And I reject what I see!  
And I deny what I know!  
I wish we stayed home and watched TV  
For now I feel as hollow as any wino or banker  
so let's go play some videogames...want to? OK...Milo?

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