

Seattle City Council

Housing, Human Services, Health and Culture Committee Meeting

2 p.m. Wednesday, December 12th, 2012

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Sibyl James**

Today's poet is **Frances McCue** (presented by Judith Roche)

Frances McCue is a poet, essayist, reviewer and arts instigator. From 1996-2006, she was the founding director of Richard Hugo House in Seattle. In 2011, McCue became the first writer to win the Washington State Book Award for one book (The Bled, a poetry collection) and place as a finalist for a second book (The Car That Brought You Here Still Runs, a collection of essays about Northwest towns and the poet Richard Hugo) in the same year. Currently, she is the Writer in Residence in the University of Washington's Undergraduate Honors Program. As a public scholar and arts instigator, McCue has spent her career connecting academic inquiries with community life.
www.francesmccue.com.

Where did you go Kurt Cobain? Where did you go?

by Frances McCue

Here's a twenty-years-later scream for you boy-man
 Clorox-haired singer and the pain
Amidst riches that songs could not cure
 I'm banging the steering wheel in my sing-along way
While my screech heaves along the lake
 Just down this boulevard Kurt Cobain just down here
You put a rifle to your chin to your sweet blond head
 And I was humming *I don't have a gun No I don't have a gun*
Whammy across the water taunting like all yesterdays
 As the cap-splat of the shot and the twang shriek
Of the song flipped back for years and I hear it
 When I drive past hear it at the beach can't help singing
Even now as you are the boy in long johns and smeared
 Tee shirts and me backstage where the scream still leaks
Into the Seattle we've sleekly become our big city
 All that glass and wood scrubbed free of moss

I was a teacher young then and my high-schoolers lit
Candles and put up *Nevermind* posters and *Bleach* handbills
Wanting to know how could the world be so damaged
Even when you were rich and these kids were sort of rich
A lot of them really so like a quick and cheap heroin fix
To a boy who slept on top of the radiator in class
I pass your old house Nirvana boy where a set of golf clubs
Rests against the big cedar gate and grownups live there now
All the astrologers and dealers and hangers-on finally fallen away
Next to the park with scorches in the bench, candle wax
Frozen on the planks where kids sit as little proto punks
Showing up from Omaha or Asheville or Cheyenne
Tossed here like you from a dead town like Aberdeen
I could have been one of them and me too
Lumber-numbered and netted from a storm about to reappear

With everyone else, I went to Seattle Center for the memorial
When Courtney Love screamed the suicide note over the speakers
And we prayed no kids would copycat your gun to chin
Knowing that the bands back then opened a room where kids lived
In dream where they played music plucked without scold
All the heroin they could shoot or hoof in the sway of being alive
Together without real talk just the old anthropology
Of riff and slouch maybe making out at The Crocodile
And my classes with so much British lit so much bland
Holding our books up to our ears listening for clues
Boys knitted and girls twirled their hair and we rattled through
Poems until they told us something—the big tarot of being alive
I wanted to have art repair things and music console even while
We were singing *And I don't have a gun No I don't have a gun*

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