

Seattle City Council

Housing, Human Services, Health and Culture Committee Meeting

2 p.m. Wednesday, December 14th, 2011

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Sibyl James**

Today's poet is **Kathleen Flenniken**

Kathleen Flenniken's first book of poetry, *Famous*, was named a Notable Book by the American Library Association and a finalist for the Washington State Book Award. Her second collection, *Plume*, about growing up in Richland next to the Hanford Nuclear Site, will be published in spring 2012 by University of Washington Press.

COYOTE

by Kathleen Flenniken

*Pronunciation: \ kī-ō'-tē, chiefly Western kī'-ōt *

After years away,
I met you again on the tongue
of an old friend from home. *Kī'-ōt.*

Trotting through sagebrush. Wild
by any name. I'd moved to a green isle city
that pronounced you *kī-ō'-tē*

and abandoned you by the side of the road.
I'd forgotten your silver, slope-shouldered form
and gaze.

You're not a citizen of language or memory,
but I am. Changing your name
was a betrayal of home

born of living among outsiders,
born of looking back through outsiders' eyes
at interchangeable houses landscaped

with wishing wells and pansies.
I could never love the brown hills around us.
Now, in the city, who can love the desert in me?

Kī'-ōt. Kī-ō'-tē. You live outside pronunciation.
I'm become like you
and can't say your name either way.

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