

Seattle City Council

**Finance and Culture Committee Meeting**

2 p.m. Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup> , 2014

**Words' Worth**

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Sierra Nelson**

Today's poet is **Rachel Kessler**

**Rachel Kessler** grew up in Seattle in the 1980s and currently lives a few blocks from the hospital in which she was born, while her kids attend Garfield High and Washington Middle schools, where her grandpa went to school in the 1930s. Her art and writing are published in the anthology *The Open Daybook*, and she is co-author of books *Who Are We?* (with 7-inch record) and *TYPO*, made as co-founder of collaborative literary teams the *Vis-à-Vis Society* and *Typing Explosion*, respectively. Her work has appeared in *Tin House*, *USA Today*, *The Stranger*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Narrative*, and elsewhere. She earned a BA in literature and creative writing from the University of Washington and works as a teaching artist with *Writers in the Schools*, *Path With Art*, and *Centrum*. Inspired by everyday occurrences, she has performed poetry in parks, on buses, disguised as a tree, aboard water taxis, in phone booths, hair salons, and public restrooms.

**The Target Genre**

by Rachel Kessler

The first efforts to make really good yet inexpensive target games for the people resulted in the creation of one of the most beautiful targets the world has ever known – The Banjo.

What you thought was the target is not the target.

Joan of Arc. She was not French. The archangel, Michael, told her, "Go, go to France, if you must." Her father told her he would drown her with his own hands if she did.

Concentric circles, rippling out in red rings, this is not the target. This is a symbol. This is a white dog's eye. A white dog's diseased eye. A white expanse of stripmall for which he stands. I will drown that dog with my own hands. Aim your fingers elsewhere.

That dog's hair is so white it is religious. Aim and shoot.

Whites of eyes. My ass.

Red of lips. Rationed in England during World War II to conserve glycerin for making explosives, we kept them red, here in the U.S., for morale. A woman's resultant vivacious spirit, self-confidence and geniality was infectious, to be transmitted directly into the male members of the family.

There.

That

is the target. Right in the kisser.

An essential non-essential. Warmed by the red-glow of propaganda.

It was believed that the condemned burned at the stake would have no body to be resurrected in the Afterlife.

You can point the gun but you can't change your point of view.

This term should not be used for genres that do not involve shooting. Objects or characters should not actively elude the player-character.

This term should not be used to describe a young man running for his life down the street, my street, at 8 PM, a gun pumping his stride in his left hand as he flashes past Ezell's Fried Chicken. Kids step into the street to let him pass. Run. You better run.

You can point the gun but you can't change your point of view.

Ask the child to tell the meaning of bonnet. Of tiny. Of cottage.

Of pound. Of sorry, soldier.

Of Rich.

As in bank.

As in castle.

And press.

What is the meaning of rent?

What is noise?

And ancient  
demand.

Siren,

and survey

to the silent beating

heartlight of copcar.

You can point the gun but you can't change your point of view.

Nine out of 16 responses should be correct. How many of his real bullets will actually connect? Is this the target? Is this? This? The father's hands grasp the controller. Points accrue. It is hot in my hands. No heaven for you.

*-- end --*