Winter 2004

Poems: In the Region of Words

Dan Raphael
Portland State University

Carlos Reyes
Portland State University

Alicia Beale
Portland State University

Judith Barrington
Portland State University

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/metroscape

Part of the Urban Studies and Planning Commons

Recommended Citation
Raphael, Dan; Reyes, Carlos; Beale, Alicia; and Barrington, Judith, "Poems: In the Region of Words" (2004). Metroscape. Paper 83.
http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/metroscape/83

This Article is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Metroscape by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. For more information, please contact pdxscholar@pdx.edu.
Poems: in the Region of Words

One of Oregon’s longest running poetry quarterlies, fireweed, features regional writers, many of whom live in and write about the metroscope. Now 12 years old, fireweed is living up to its name and growing into its place. It takes a tough weed like epilobium angustifolium to grow first after forest fires; fireweed magazine embodies its namesake’s toughness and sense of place. The selections reprinted here capture moods and moments familiar to our region.

For more information about fireweed, contact the editors at 5204 N. Gay Avenue, Portland, Oregon, 97217.

Dan Raphael

Grazing the Elements

A bowl full of deep water that can’t be lifted –
i didn’t know our house went so far down, with a walk-in china closet
as each meal is comprehensive:

everything the greens & carrots
read with their roots, the potatoes immersion theatre
as if the local park’s not an extinct volcano
but a patient mound of tubers sharing news with the rainflow

feedlot cows have so little to say – quonset fryers even less –
with no vistas to experience, eating what’s mono-cropped pelletized
and as edited & steam-cleaned by additives as the network news.
yet to eat the chicken who’d patrolled your yard for months in all weathers
eating last year’s corn, now’s grass and insects;
or the cow who’s tongued every corner of the back 40.

hunters think they enjoy the hunt but it’s information they’re after,
the lore of the forest too compelling to resist, yet too foreign
for a primitive to unscroll:

i don’t drink through my mouth
only by soaking in a river or fresh tub.
i eat soil and sunshine, treasuring eggs and grubs,
standing naked in a windy gully ‘til i’m too full to dress

i don’t drink through my mouth
only by soaking in a river or fresh tub.
i eat soil and sunshine, treasuring eggs and grubs,
standing naked in a windy gully ‘til i’m too full to dress
Carlos Reyes

**In the Fall**

I walk the dangerous edge of damp gravel roads the perimeter of the aging forests the changing leaves the gold instead of green twirling in a colder wind

How I enjoy it the smell of wild apples beginning to turn to cider a bitter frost and crabapples like dim lanterns a china pheasant popping from beneath my feet to wake me from my reverie

I enjoy the hope for one more day before the final rains arrive to walk down the leafy lane yet hoping for a break in the clouds, to see bright sun once more

before winter tightens its jaws around the trees before the gray pulling clouds suffocate the wind before the lake, rivers and sea fall from the heavens drowning every green thing before the final fading

all green all gold to dull to papery pale

Alicia Beale

**At Luncsine**

Clouds drag by overhead, searching for shore, It's a cool afternoon in a month of dark dreams, navy suits and gray dresses follow one another like schools of fish along the river path, already caught in the current's cold reality. Even lovers walk slow, watch for a pace to drown themselves out of serenity.

Ignoring the damp grass, I sit alone. The wind dances with debris then takes up the feel of an oncoming storm. With each gust, my body rocks, tethered to the ground but acknowledging the yield and pull of blue sky. When did I become bored with sailboats, cumulus clouds, spring days?

What world was it, that no longer exists? As if it were a seagull waiting for dead fish to rise up from the ocean like offerings. I perch the book on my knees. Across white pages, words form a net, only nothing swims out from the spine. It's only me that's captured, drowning, doing the dead man's float.
And then she told me everything was dead
or lost.
The dog was important but not because it had been with
her for long:
a few weeks ago she'd handed it some fries and coke.
It had stayed.
And while she said it, she turned away her face to hide
her pleasure.

And then she told me no one had talked to her since
New Year's Eve
and only then because people were out on the street,
singing and drunk.
They talked to her but it wasn't what she would call
conversation, she said.
They puked a lot and cried a bit and thought they had
it bad.

She didn't mind the solitude. It was better than living
at home
where her father couldn't be stopped and one of her
brothers tried it too.
The cold was bad though — cold like she'd never imagined
in her life:
last week she'd almost killed a man, just for his quilted
coat.

Her mom had done her best — she stated it loudly, several
times.
She didn't want me to think that her mother was
negligent, she said.
Yes, negligent's the word she used; I noticed it right
away.
She'd been in school a while and could've been a poet I
thought,
but first she skipped to get a job and later she worked
the streets,
and before she turned sixteen she quit and moved in
under the bridge.
At the weekend market she sat on the ground and
chalked mandala designs
with an upturned cap beside her and some water in a
mug.

Sunday nights, she ate fries and coke — it was a Sunday the
dog had come—
and dropped by her mom's with the change from the cap,
but rarely hung around.
She needed dogfood; I gave her some money and left.
and when I looked back
the dog was resting its chin on her thigh, one muddy ear
cocked high.