

2009

Giving Up Green

Siobhan K. Phillips
Dickinson College

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholar.dickinson.edu/faculty_publications

 Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Phillips, Siobhan. "Giving Up Green." *Southwest Review* 94, no. 4 (2009): 569.

This article is brought to you for free and open access by Dickinson Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator. For more information, please contact scholar@dickinson.edu.

SIOBHAN PHILLIPS



Giving Up Green

Sometimes he determines what his choice
requires: if once or twice in coming years
it may seem awkward not to call on friends
with lawns, to walk in gardens, drive through towns
of houses lined in moss and bound with vines,
or gaze from passing trains at rain-soft valleys
lush with ferns and grass, he still might turn
his looking back on bricks and carriage axles.
Here, more simply, moving through a city
bare of cloud, its blocks secure, its river
earnest planes of shade and sun, his practice
slows to basic tasks and paces. Hours
of looking at a single rationed lime.
A morning till a leaf is only veins.
An afternoon of making stems appear
more lucid than their vase's frosted glass.
And yet his daily track grows longer, routes
extended: then he worries, climbing stairs,
that sheer exhaustion might obscure a lack
of patience. Or of nerve. So when the clear
that comes at five o'clock on cloudy days
engulfs the nearby roofs in gold and rose,
a stain of noon beneath the darker flaring
indigos of dust, he maps a blue,
a red, a yellow square across the wall
and stares. It's almost more than he can stand.
His curtains fill the room with fading air.
Below, a window frames a woman paring
apples: knife and hand; the skin unwinding
shyly from her guiding wrist, unwrapping
flesh and falling loose in severed curves.
He stops to rest. She smoothes a strand of hair.