Receipt by Karen Leona Anderson (review)

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of the book's central concerns about the past, about translation, and how the ruin of language, and of history, are navigated and picked over in the present. But I find myself returning to a line two stanzas before, in a far quieter moment, in which we hear a seemingly off-handed thirsty boast from our speaker: "I can drink in any language." The surface-level connotation is clear: there is a universal grammar of drunkenness that easily elides most barriers of class, language, history, and nationality. But the phrase also invites an opportunity for idiomatic misprision: the speaker can also "drink in" any language, as in consume, in toto, the whole of it. There is in this moment a fissuring between what we and language are, and are capable of. However much one drinks in, or asks questions of, or carries across, or preserves in stanzas, or remembers about another in any language, such knowing is temporary; the dead still have no idea why they died. We might return, then, to that first poem's first stanza, to reconsider what might initially appear as a shortcoming, and see in it instead something essential in Bakken's latest work:

> Few words passed between us then,
> yet somehow we heard what the other said.

It isn't merely history, or discrete moments, but language itself that feels inhabited rather than invoked in this collection. This sense of being inhabited is the collection's greatest strength, and proof of an exciting development in Bakken's poetic practice. In tempering his approach, and embracing its inherent shortcomings, Bakken reminds us (and himself) that there is much to be gained despite these inevitable erasures, silencings, and effacements. As the speaker of "Translation" says: "Still, you waved to me from the other bank / when a blue rowboat passed under the bridge. / Both oars in conversation with the water."

—Eric Smith

Shorter Reviews

Karen Leona Anderson. *Receipt*. Milkweed Editions, 2016.

Karen Leona Anderson's *Receipt* is an interrogation of the domestic that draws from cookbooks, shopping receipts, and the physical space of the home. While initially organized to reflect an orderly kept home, this poetry collection's three marked sections catalogue and complicate the meaning of home and the implications of housekeeping. Household tasks and chores break down and reveal their sparest parts: a gathering of objects, desires, and bodies. Anderson resituates the domestic goddess myth as one not of mastery over the home but of a figure full of contradictory needs that extend beyond the realm of the kept household. The collection's first-person speakers, who inhabit most of these poems, continue through daily existence. These figures situate their lives within consumerist impulses that demand consumption in order to achieve personal, physical, and household perfection. Rather than hover at the surface, though, these poems strive to uncover what lurks underneath, what is hidden under dust-free corners, pedicured feet, and costly dresses.

The collection's title section, "Receipt," serves as a drawer full of past purchases, ranging from clothing to an epidural, that talk back to monetary value. In "Lacy ($292.06 modcloth.com)," a bridesmaid dress from the well-known online vintage fashion store turns seething and brutal: "I sew you to your shadow, crude / and machine made, torque your honeymoon, // bad fairy at the wedding." The dress elicits a curse. Any sugar-coated and carefully planned matrimonial bliss is interrupted at every turn while the speaker mocks the bride: "I look / forward to your indoor tan, your SUV, / and your fertility kit." The home turns toxic, as even macramé becomes "ozoney" and

dangerous to live on. With these receipts, the costs are not solely monetary—rather, cultural expectations and emotional costs accrue among these poems, seeking an outlet beyond the mute object.

Interspersed among these sharp receipts are complementary poems titled after common and usually un-romanticized birds. In "Pigeon," the speaker embodies a pigeon preparing its nest for offspring. During this act, the speaker claims, "I'm all throat: all mother: fiery / blue-green: I'll make oppression bitter: / I'll feed them all there is." The mother's sacrifice culminates in the desperate need to cling onto what persists through her offspring and fellow birds. Unlike the receipts, however, these birds have no monetary value placed on them. Rather, their worth comes from how the speaker inhabits the birds, projecting desires through them. The interspersed bird and receipt poems in this section serve as commentary on cultural assumptions and the costs associated with inhabiting a particular body. These underlying, unseen costs, as pointed out in these poems, go far beyond a price tag.

The failure to live up to cultural expectations is addressed in *Receipt*'s opening section, which is filled with recipes and cookery books. In many of these poems, the speaker fails to live up to domestic standards; instead, she becomes consumed by the recipes, which have their own particular flavor of wildness. In "Venison," a poem, as the epigraph notes, after *The Wild Game Cookbook* (1972), the deer are simultaneously artificial and untamed, "built on stripling legs or the sun strained divine / through their ears' big pink shells—." The poem's neat tercets begin to break apart as the speaker turns feral: "I'm gone // from wolf to bad fawn for them, men: / trash tin at the heart of silver, picked off […]." The speaker searches for scraps, becoming animal and disorderly. But when the speaker stays within the home, even pie baking is tainted by the thought of men. In "Pie," the speaker works through the familiar act of making the crust and building up the dessert. Crust becomes flesh as the speaker tells the addressed you:

> now cool, you'll see through slicks
> and sheers of juice the sign I pieced
> from crust through red, through cover,
>
> through sugar, your name,
> you stitched to it.

Baking as bodily nourishment and domestic task becomes an incantation, calling the wrongdoer to atone for their mistakes within the home.

These moments of breakdown, the peeling away of surface, culminate in *Receipt*'s third and final section. The speaker, although frantically trying to maintain appearances, lets go. Commenting on the desires of the self and others, the speaker moves in and out of the home to the fair, the mall, and the surrounding neighborhood. In the suburbanite pastoral "Echolocation," the speaker observes oncoming winter, noting the collapse between winter and aging: "We all want // to be sieved and saved, a signal, / an emergency. Wishing the self // would stir while the others hold still." Aging leaves the domestic goddess behind to remain in the home, alone. Anderson's *Receipt* cuts straight through domestic artifice while acknowledging the real labor and work within the home. Underneath this surface an entrenched history and heartache is revealed through poems that refuse to be solely consumed.

—Alyse Bensel

Adam Tipps Weinstein. *Some Versions of the Ice*. Les Figues Press, 2016.

Of destinations for exile, why does Frankenstein's monster flee to the Arctic ice?

At once authorized and undermined by the skittish rhetoric of non-fiction, the nine essays in