

of a glacier, of a sky that is the “blue of the high holy lakes of the Himalayas” (“Remission”).

Indeed, we watch entranced until the last poem in this collection reveals to us the final, inevitable scene of each of our lives—“Sky Burial” set in the Talkeetna Mountains, Alaska—in which the narrator requests, perhaps on behalf of us all: “Bury me to the sky.”

Joanna Lilley, Whitehorse

Auguries. By Clea Roberts. Brick Books, 2017. 101 pages.

Reviewed by Kendalyn Mckisick

With seven years between Clea Roberts’s debut collection, *Here Is Where We Disembark* (Freehand Books, 2010), and her most recent collection, *Auguries*, the poet has continued her work of precisely mapping the land of the North, with a nod to the historical and personal past as well as to the future’s potential. Everyday items and everyday interactions are illuminated through fresh and powerful language, harnessed by Roberts’s undeniably deep sense of knowing, understanding of the human experience, and her connection to the place she calls home. Anyone who reads her books knows that what is found there can be taken as the absolute truth; nothing tries to be anything it is not. Roberts is not afraid to approach the familiar, and she seems to do so with the promise of honesty and of inclusion.

While Roberts manages to leave nothing behind, language and space are used sparingly. Entering these poems heightens attention through her use of the short, enjambed lines. These also give the reader plenty of white space to breathe, and to process the information of the poems. Tranquility is found in the poems, in their precise and compact formal elements, where the real and the imagined collide, where Linnaea becomes human and a tongue becomes a petal “drawing down the milk” (46). The brevity of lines are reminiscent of haiku, as are the subjects of nature. The quality of laying images one on top of the other expose something more vivid and more intimate that allows us to witness the communion between woman and nature, in which “nothing belongs entirely / to innocence or to blame” (51).

From an experience of a mother’s death to a singular breath expelled in winter, nothing is left ignored in the 101 page collection; Roberts creates equality between the immediately profound—her

mother's sick "lungs [that] crackle *like footsteps in snow*" (88)—and the mundane—how "Tomorrow / at the family reunion / people will sweat in the shade, / eat wilted salads / or pieces of cake / with marshmallow icing, / sigh or laugh, / rock on their heels / or sit very still / in plastic lawn chairs" (73).

Roberts situates her reader in a cold and frozen place that is "sealed with ice" as she boldly states, "I've decided to speak, / to release certainty, // to take winter's ravens / as my rowdy clerics. // The street lamps bend / to the crown of frost I make / just by breathing" (3). The acceptance of knowledge of the sacred—primarily of nature and the body's ability to take up space both physically and spiritually—as well as the claim to agency and validation in one's own actions and experiences, is what *Auguries* is all about. The tension between the ability to choose and the inability to control the patterns of life is at the core of these poems:

There will be the things
we have chosen to dwell
upon, and the things
we have chosen
to forget, as well as
the pine needles
caught in your hair,
our bodies cradled
in cacophonies
of wildflower and lichen.

But first there will be
intentions and mutability,
a study of light and clouds
through the treetops,
the subtle ways to give
ourselves completely.

The passing corvid, aware
of its reputation for intelligence,
will fly over,
clearing its throat.

Roberts exemplifies her awareness of the ability of all things to contain prophetic significance—the importance of finding meaning and meaning-making in every aspect of life; in this sense, the mundane gains profundity and, again, we are reminded that we have the power of choosing what to keep and what to forget. With various birds as her guides, with whom she has developed her own private language, she has embarked on making sense of life’s binaries that oftentimes cannot be reconciled.

The experience of reading *Auguries* is saturated with the silence one needs in order to hear, a vividness in the real and in the imagined, and raw emotion. It offers a quietude that we find when we are alone in the middle of nowhere or when we find ourselves in an intimate and private room. The liminal space we inhabit within the poems is one that is beautifully reconciled in the final line; we are taken to the room of realization where we see there is a beginning and an end, ease and dis-ease, humanness and non-humanness, and where finally “above us, our eyes // blinking, soft, / returned / to amazement.” Roberts’s attention to detail and willingness to dwell within areas seemingly void of excitement, is deserving of high praise and something worth teaching; it reminds us to let go and to give ourselves to wonder.

Kendalyn Mckisick, Fairbanks

A Yukon Winter Coat. By Rachel Finn. Independently published, 2017. 34 illustrated pages.

Reviewed by Deanna McLeod

Any exhausted adult who has read to a toddler or preschooler at bedtime knows the relief of a picture book with words that flow easily when read aloud. And it’s a particular pleasure when the words and images tell a story that engage the bleary-eyed reader as well as the small listener—especially if the child pleads for the story again and again.

Since my own son is now thirteen and reading biographies of innovators or watching YouTube, I confess I sometimes miss those days when we cuddled up with a stack of picture books. So I was excited for the excuse to pick up Rachel Finn’s *A Yukon Winter Coat*, especially since my son agreed to let me read it to him.