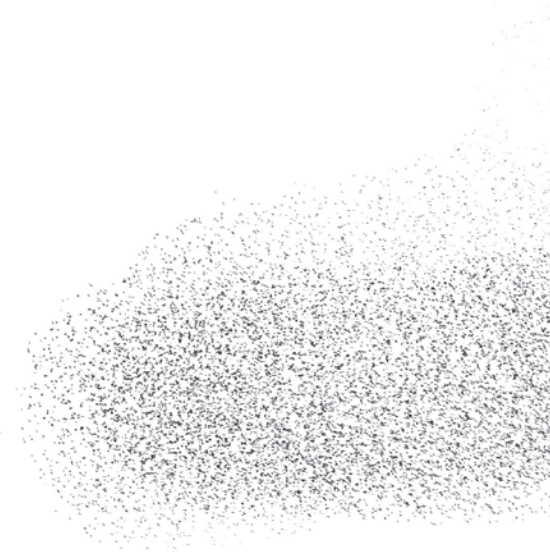


CLOUD PHYSICS



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OSKANA POETRY & POETICS



Karen Enns

Cloud Physics



University of Regina Press

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for Francis, Elliot, Lawren

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CLOUD PHYSICS

This is the time of winds from the south,
the time of bells, bronze cities, smoke and ash,

the time of bridges like suspended ideologies, all frame and buttress,
sky-imposed. Of chromaticisms, polyrhythms,
polytonal riffs coming off the baffles,
peonies of sound.

This is the time of crushed glass and stone, lime dust
that stays and stays in our mouths, the language of not speaking,
of carrying the vegetable weight, the last treeline, the geologies of terror
and eternity, the motherlode of fear, of grace,

the flash of face to face to face in our minds,
cloud physics, hail, massive doubt.

This is the geometry of fragmentation.
Here, this star lapse, these rims of light in the hinterland,

opening and closing, prairie planks of loss
and then retrieval, loss again,

an echo of gravity in the pull.

EPILOGUE

We saw the world.

There were points of clarity on the surface
where the reeds and shallow rivers took in the light,
but the core eluded us.

There were colours. It seemed we could distinguish
every possibility of tone, we could bear
both synthesis and transformation
in one look. It rained, always,
at the most difficult of times.

In the beginning we carved our words into the bark of arbutus,
oak, black cherry, and lime. Longevity was on our minds
but also the feel of the knife.

Words like love, want, revenge, and symbols
for lightning and trade.

There wasn't a word for what was missing.

We used absence sometimes,
sometimes resonance or echo, even grief,
but language came up short.

We studied the constellations
to understand the structure of relevance,
but the palette was enormous, the form of one thing
separated from the other by too great a distance,
and we turned to each other, to the small bones in our hands and feet,
the lines on our foreheads and around our eyes.

We wept. We stole from others
when we couldn't see a way to offer beauty on our own,
purely, as we wanted to.

We turned to poetry but couldn't understand
the shiftlessness of metaphor, how it came and went
without a backward glance,
how it honoured nothing and no one.

We wanted something solid, soil and root,
borders, flat stones of meaning.

The trees on which we carved our words
died in the years of drought.