and the mundane: "it envelops, / this cloud of unknowing, a bubble of sight / that moves when you move, like a rainbow trick," he writes. "you could be anywhere – / but you're not, you're here."

Al Rempel's *Undiscovered Country*, disturbing, involving, and provocative, speaks with a distinct voice wonderfully free of contemporary literary cliché.

Robert Martens
Abbotsford, British Columbia

Karen Enns, *Cloud Physics.* Regina: University of Regina Press, 2017. Pp. 64. Softcover, $19.95.

Karen Enns creates an ominous atmosphere in "Cloud physics," the first poem in her engrossing third poetry collection. We sense we are in another world and another time, recurring motifs in a collection built for rumination. "This is the time of winds from the south / the time of bells, brown cities, smoke and ash." Repeated use of the phrase "this is the time," invokes the wisdom of others who have use the same phrase—Paul Simon, Charles Dickens, and King Solomon in Ecclesiastes among them. But soon, as we read on, we understand instead we are in the world of Jeremiah's Lamentations.

One of the strengths of this short collection is the range it displays. "Epilogue," the next poem, is the longest in the collection, using lines that cover two pages with no stanza breaks. Much as we might expect from a poem placed early in the collection but titled "Epilogue," the poem is disorienting, but also disturbingly beautiful:

> Nothing was questioned
> after the last polar flares broke through
> and silence took over.

Passages like this, as I understand them, read like a chronicle of life at the end of the world, and are offered as lamentations and prophesy of Apocalypse. Her collection uses postmodern strategies of disruption, so readers take notice of her careful choice of language, its bleak beauty, adept and remarkable metaphor, and the handy use of lists like the catalogue of sounds in "Ad Libitum." Enns uses the plural first person a great deal in the collection, as well, not a common choice. There are possibilities of inclusion with the term—"we" is a many gendered pronoun, for example; "we" is

egalitarian—but it also risks, in its invocation of the "royal we," a sense of proclamation, distancing the reader from the text. Enns is in some good company, though, as Anne Szumigalski was one Canadian poet comfortable with the first-person plural pronoun and proclamation.

Midway through the collection, Enns explores the timely concern of climate change. It is an important, deeply relevant theme, and it is notable to see how easily she moves from the mythopoetic and apocalyptic in the first section to three poems about the physical urgency of a warming world. "Old Sunflowers," "Wild Fires Burn on the Mainland," and "Homeland" begin with rain and end with drought. The first poem, "Old Sunflowers," ends with what might seem hopeful, promising "water will run off the eaves and into the streets. / From a distance, we'll hear the relief." The following poem, "Wild Fires Burn on the Mainland," referring to the fires in British Columbia several years ago, reads as freshly relevant in light of the fires that have ravished Australia this past year. Enns, who lives in Victoria, showcases her talent for metaphor in this haunting poem: "the air is parchment between our teeth," she writes; "our lungs, flat pouches, store thin banners of wind"; "The sun's a smoking coin." The final poem in the sequence is called "Homeland," which gives the reader a desolate portrait of what happens after the burning. Lines like "the rest is indecipherable," suggest the impossibility of grasping the environmental consequences of the climate change crisis, but also its cost of lost histories, and story. The final clause of the poem—"we've been here and gone"—is a sharp declaration of the end times.

The remaining poems in the collection run in varying directions. Enns shows herself skilled with the lyric. It's relieving to see that the art of the lyric is still alive, in fact, as she demonstrates in effective poems such as "The Planets Moving In," "To Get a Word In," and "Notice on the Door." She is also a skilled pianist, and her poem "Piano Practice" shows a sense of humour in the midst of our current terrors: "today I found a clump of shoots," she writes, "behind the piano leg, green / and shining, apparently unphased / by my arpeggios." She also includes a sequence of poems called "Twelve Months, in memory of Peter G. Enns," whom, I assume, is her father. The poems start in May, and end in the following April. I was moved by the last couplet of the poem "July," which reads: "And then it was over, and it became then and this is now, / and I am not as far from dying as it seems to you . . ." I was similarly struck by the late arrival of a first-person pronoun, an "I" poem, in "Smoke," which includes the wonderful lines, "and this is what I

think: devotion is a sound, / not a weight, as I would have thought before."

Showing a performer's awareness of the importance of beginnings and endings, *Cloud Physics* finishes as strongly as it begins. I will let her words close this review, as well, but I hope it will encourage readers to seek out the rest of the collection. From the last poem of the collection, "Its Own Beauty":

> A match in the night it was,
> lit, but not contagious.
> Its own beauty it was, a self
> within a flame, within
> a white burning.
> And we held it for the time it took,
> held in there in the dark,
> our flicker of history.

Victor Enns
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Todd Davis, *Native Species*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2019. Pp. 110. Softcover, $19.95.

Todd Davis, like naturalist and fellow American writer Annie Dillard, is a stalker and an explorer of the natural world. His new poetry collection, *Native Species*, invites readers to join a guided tour into habitats where fish and fowl, mammals, reptiles, and myriad insects breed and multiply. Where they hunt and are hunted. Where they must adapt to a shifting landscape and precarious weather or die.

This foray into the natural world is neither casual nor occasional. It requires alertness of the senses and attentiveness that is both curious and contemplative, qualities that, when practiced faithfully over time, become a habit of being in the world and ultimately generate a desire to bear witness.

Fortunately, our guide in this collection has those qualities, and also possesses impressive artistic skills. The witness, therefore, is expressed in poems of beauty and depth of engagement. Their strength comes, at times, from lines that are simple and unassuming: "A gray fox falls through the river ice and drowns." So begins a poem describing an animal's corpse encased in ice. It ends in disbelief at "the shape of former suffering."