



White Lung

Kimberly O'Connor

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When coal dust infiltrates the lungs of coal miners, we call that disease black lung. Kimberly O'Connor's debut collection, *White Lung*, illuminates how racism also permeates American air—hate, fear, and shame left in our wake. O'Connor breaks the silence our culture expects of white women. Her unflinching poems catalog how racial epithets can get passed down through a family, documenting a 2014 execution along the way, as well as archiving events leading up to *Roe v. Wade*. O'Connor examines how the self might not only speak its own truths but open up spaces for more capacious truth.

"Your heritage is your albatross, states the speaker in Kimberly O'Connor's intrepid debut. Although not readily apparent, the altar of white supremacy is a haunting social order that withers the humanity and spirit of its adherents while increasing its claw-like grip through a demanding silence that has affected generations, enhancing its power over a nation. *White Lung* aims to destroy sanctified provinces of hatred and female self-loathing as a means of reckoning with familial history and recuperating any remaining dignity for the future of her daughter; no, all our daughters."

-Major Jackson



"What does it mean to be awake in America in the 21st century? Kimberly O'Connor's brilliant debut does the hard work of an imagination committed to ethical reflection in poems moving with swift urgency and cunning formal energy."

-Joshua Weiner

"In *White Lung*, the deep undercurrents of racism and sexism in America intersect with the poet's personal and family history in ways that are both disturbing and profoundly illuminating of our increasingly dystopian moment. Emotionally arresting, formally inventive, and wide awake to the suffering all around us, *White Lung* is a searing debut."

-John Brehm

Kimberly O'Connor is a North Carolina native who lives in Golden, Colorado. She works for Lighthouse Writers Workshop. Her poetry has been published in *B O D Y*, *Copper Nickel*, *Colorado Review*, *Harvard Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Slice*, *storySouth*, *THRUSH*, and elsewhere. Learn more at kimberlyoconnor.net.