

Part I: Creative Component
“Breathing Plural”

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Presented as requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Faculty of Arts
Department of English and Creative Writing
The University of Adelaide, Australia
January 2022

BREATHING PLURAL
EM KÖNIG

Other publications by Em König

POETRY

Lightly, on the Skin

MUSIC

god/boy/party/pill

Masc

EM KÖNIG

BREATHING PLURAL



First printed in 2020
by Cordite Publishing Inc.

PO Box 393
Carlton South 3053
Victoria, Australia
cordite.org.au | corditebooks.org.au

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National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication:

König, Em
Breathing Plural
978-0-6485116-6-3 paperback
I. Title.
A821.3

Poetry set in Spectral 10 / 14
Cover design by Zoë Sadokierski
Text design by Kent MacCarter and Zoë Sadokierski
Printed and bound by McPherson's Printing, Maryborough, Victoria.

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Inc. Cordite Publishing Inc. thanks Penelope Goodes, Jill Jones and
Em König for their input during the production and editing of this
book. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government
through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



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PREFACE

As I write this, fires are burning out of control on Kangaroo Island and all along the east coast of Australia. Lives, homes, half a billion animals: gone. As I write this, I am awaiting a blood sunset, the kind that filters the land through a lens of pink, helping everything to complement the colour of my acrylic nails. As I write this, citizens of the USA (and the world) are holding their collective breath awaiting retaliation from the Iranian army in response to the assassination of Qasem Soleimani. As I write this, I can tell the three avocados in the fruit bowl beside me will all ripen tomorrow morning. As I write this, I am wondering if I can afford to renew my gym membership and what will happen to my body if I don't.

As I write this, I question the necessity of a poem – written on and with and for atoms, spoken through waves – combustible, ephemeral, biodegradable. Each poem in this book exists in two forms, both inhabiting a unique state of decay or decomposition (perhaps re-composition?). How you choose to engage is entirely up to you. Read this book back to front, front to back, upside down, right way round. Start at the beginning, in the middle; breathe it in one word at a time. Use it as a doorstop, as Tinder, as rolling paper – but read it first if only to revel in its potential/futility.

INTRODUCTION

Will we miss nature, asks Em König in *Breathing Plural*? In ‘dreams of stale breath’, maybe. Or ‘in another life, on another planet ... maybe’ (echoing The Only Ones’ only hit). Glenn Albrecht says in *Earth Emotions*, ‘It [nature] effectively no longer exists’. We know, and it’s not a recent problem. Timothy Morton’s 2007 book was titled *Ecology Without Nature*. Gary Snyder’s 1992 new and selected was called *No Nature*. Bill McKibben published *The End of Nature* in 1989. Just for starters.

Em König knows this relationship is/was *the* difficult one. So how can we humans mourn or acknowledge the break, the loss? To feel it as lovers do, as mothers and children do, as friends and companions do. Because we are breaking up with nature, they say in ‘Dear Nature’. And Nature is breaking up with us.

We’ve worn each other
thin. Lake dry. We’re arid,
dear Nature. I will miss you. Love ebbs
And carries big.

Thankfully, König’s *Breathing Plural* is not disaster chic, nor is it wilderness kitsch. I don’t want to burden the book with a label such as queer ecopoetics (but there, I said it) but for König, no one is one, things aren’t straight, and neither, obviously, is the planet. We exist in multiplicity. So this book might also be asking, is the poem splitting up with Poetry, or with the page, or the single readerly eye, the single poet’s voice? What might this mean, especially now in the climate and virus emergency, to compose or recompose, to decay or adapt?

This book’s queerness is queer in structure, not just content. It queers edges rather than flirting with centres (there is flirting in it, by the way). It’s unstable, multiple and accessible in the way you can read it anyway you like, backwards, upside down, pick ’n’ mix. You only have to open it to see that. In it, form disrupts the normal, the expected,

sanctioned ways of reading, and disturbs hierarchies of long and short, front and back, as well as top and bottom, dare I suggest, in various senses. König places poetry's upside-downness literally on the page. These effects haunt the book through iteration, erasure and doubleness as its words multiply, diminish and spawn across and around the pages.

This generative and fluent (even effluent) work also traverses bodies, inside them as well as outside, from permed hair to arsehole, wet spot to herpes blister, as well as through grounds and positions, over terrains as diverse as a club, a bed, an outback town, a London street, the Adelaide suburbs, the banks of Karrawirri Parri (the Torrens River).

It's a book you can do things with and one you can also do things along with. You could read it in self-isolation, on the bus, during sex, or on a walk, say, by the Torrens. It's a book you can make into another book, taking apart its language as König does, to see how it fits, falls, fucks, tumbles and mulches with other things. Try it.

König's queer decomposing always leads to something new and shows us that our self-composition is more than simply identity. Who we are is part of 'we' as well as 'I'. These poems enact entanglements with things/beings, with desires and unnatural natures, what's happening in neglected places, the cracks (including the body's cracks), as well as our mundane rooms and houses.

Breathing Plural is bracing, sometimes scary, camp, funny, vulnerable, angry, ironic and tender. It's the breathing work of poetry and you need to read it, whoever your 'you' is or is becoming, in whichever way the all-that's-you choose.

—Jill Jones

dreams of stale breath
to live tangled
under the sentence of us.

this is not a bird
poem. this poem is not
a bird

Dear Nature

If your name is truly that
conversation is a must – let's ferment
no surprises. Things haven't been great
between us for whiles.
I think we should consider other people,
you know this truth is
dear. Nature, how can I touch you?
You pull away too easily from pruned bathfingers.
You see my [REDACTED]
when we don't speak. Dear Nature,
we're moving on. Administering space
to breathe. Healing. Time. Room for trusting
wants and needling. We've worn each other
thin. Lake dry. We're arid,
dear Nature. I will miss you. Love ebbs
and carries big. A clean break is a want.
You're still beautiful, my heart whomps
at your green. I ache for your weather hard
plastic. Petrochemical lust. Whiff of hollowed
rubble. Methane burst. Seismic trash. Topography
of steel. Biogenic footprints. Wet steamy carbon, your forests
in reverse.

We'll both have arms
to hold us when we're gone. Nature, ignite.
We both fucked up.
I'm sorry.

In another life, on another planet ... maybe.

Em x

i touch you. a clean break.
we don't speak.
your name is healing.
time, i'm sorry.

War

We fuck like permed lesbians in VHS porn, 'Like a Virgin' pumping on the radio. The neighbours can listen to both and do so calmly, though perms are not really permanent. Spotify is free, for a time. There are so many wet spots

like war, it's been long, so the clean-up is more than the act itself. After which we point and laugh about our shame-bodies and the shapes and sounds we allow them to make now we are content.

neighbours are wet spots, content like war. (war-like content)
it's been long like our shame,
permanent – for a time.

mother was an untaught subject
legless in several certain ways
a child wading through
tar. she made dead
lands arable once, she made those deep
finger cracks. she made the bed
where seeds sown in obese heat
eat skins by the fistful.

i grow
back with etiquette,
my own, flawed pile
of gold-spun books
by an erection of misread bibles
stacked and assuming, her womanhood
all assuming

a child in tar
she made dead
i grow

Blunt

Gravity forms my lips
in sentences. There is no such thing as healthy
blisters. Internet spindles,
mitoses of opinions evolving
dying daily.
Is wilderness memorialised
in the flesh?
Bloodlust. Vomit.
Teaching dead faggots how to shave. Downstairs
she's still
she's made
herself a brittle bastard,
wishing him all
the best. She burns down like
poetry presses, the last remaining
in the procession. Steadfast we are all bent
razed beneath thick feet of bashful trauma
spat onto pornographic toilet-door
graffiti: a phone number without a name
just the promise of good head. SAY NO
TO NUCLEAR TESTING. Sharpie art
is the phases of the moon. A hole big enough for four
fingers at a squeeze. Gravity forms
my lisp in flesh. A healthy blister
memorialised: a sentence

poetry – a pornographic lisp
sentences in flesh like wildness
gravity – a hole big enough for dying

lately, i've been
watching you holding
animals like me
lightly

gentle handpalms
fondling
placing fingers lightly
on the skin

they say you can tell
a lot about a man
by the way
he places his hands
on animals like me, lightly

say skin
fingers, handpalm, fondling
he places a gentle man

Clickivism

i don't pay for haircuts
(anymore)

since it all began
falling out on its own

i blame the activism, the stress
of clicks and dirt

at least now the long summer's
near, my scalp won't freeze

and wigs suit me, they always have
like an oak in eucalyptus

the stress of falling leaves
oak, eucalyptus, long wigs
summer don't suit me
(any more)

viridescent walks
to █████, the sphere where
trees live, synthesising long
distance, distorting the mountain
a ditch, carved by wet forces
dripping through their own guard
birds, various kinds, unnameable
choking on what's meant for song
from cotton fields, spun
a reflection on the damp
forest floors, singing lightly

from the table to the fridge
fat sets, cool beige
in bowls of peaked and rising
cream. run a finger through
clutched to her pores
shapes of barrels
arterial, insatiable, incapable breath,
singalongs in hospital gowns
stories of the best and worst
of white sheets, inscribed, shakily by
abrupt endings

breathing, abrupt
a forest of white sheets
long white forest walks
a [redacted] of endings

testosterone (little t)

when i forced my queer arm elbow
deep inside this cavern
of our chest, i was reminded again, why
i no longer buy blue
glitter partly
it's about microplastics
lodging in gills and cracks
and the ocean's blinding as it is
without our help, but typically,
like musty letters or humidity
of testosterone,
it's because it never disappears
and never breaks
down

I
reminded
micropastics

gitter
of
queer

testosterone
blue
deep

Snake

I

a yellow city stroll, something
assures me she hasn't seen a man
pushing hair like mine. alluding
to length, not colour. i thank her
scoffing when she skips aside. retelling
the story she is a queen
or a demon dependent
on who's listening and how much
i've had to drink.

is it normal
to be more petrified of men
bearing rocks or women
bearing compliments than the snakes that coil
beneath them? i stopped considering yesterday
what was normal

in a shop window
vicious, maybe viscous
winds sculpt me skyward
a gorgon. yes i
am the one who is stoned.

stoned yellow petrified
a normal woman
autumn window queen

II

He's reading the bible
naked

a story about
Eve

the pain of bearing
boys

I close it
with my toes

naked bible boys
Eve
pain
a close reading

III

Dried flowers are reduced as glass
This is inarguable as
opinions falling short
from mother's branch.

No secrets why they shatter
into granules, each one smaller
than a world

They open during mornings,
when the sun gives green
chlorophyll a chance to rework
dead light into joules.

the sun when dried
large dead energy
mother's falling secrets

IV

aromas are sold
therapy on weekdays
ether. rape. chloroform & musk.
source dissipating
(t)his is a stanza
enjambéd. ingredients
seldom listed
perfume labels
wet face rags given nightly
by the blow, her breathing
slows into fanged
anosmia

dreaming
labels
breathing
perfume
seldom
wet

V

I do not believe your children are our future.
I burn the colour orange every day.

future children
burn

earthanasia.

She uses saintly
medical sharps
to flush a yellower poison.
Fermenting memories clench, spin, dissolve
in piles of fresh ground
skin. She asks, inflection slight: will you hold
my face in your palms when I die?
and in mine
and in mine
when my hot head turns
to birds
again.

Us families, we coalesce in a final rite
single-file, stroking
the endless stump
a grey parade beside a wall
of lined eyes.

Three final breaths a stroke
as well, a whisper

(I love you and
I do, but
only in hot Decembers)

will birds die in my head
when i do
again

a slow lesion mild gait smoking two packs
a minute ends in the ashtray whole yellow
mouth (yellow yellow) there is beauty in
everything when you are dying even astroturf
I am gossiping to death about death staring
death in the pupil asking where do we go
when we flutter big mouth saying I've had a
lovely life but can hear the call can hear the
break beat rapping at my lungs big mouth
asking will I need a winter coat in the heaven
I never bet on smoking pot for the first time
at eighty voice is a rasp I am one black cough
away from tomorrow is when it will all begin
I will fuck harder than my youth I will get it
up I will love everyone and tell them smelling
fake flower affairs got in order racing to say
goodbye missing teeth feral skin shitting in
a pan pain cry twenty pills with breakfast
no appetite melanoma malignant interest
benign spring a leak feed the children be
sure to show them how to rise sell the car call
the lawyer sort through boxes and boxes and
boxes of shit the labels have faded you can
have it all if you promise to tend my grave

rapping at lovely s(kin)
death will get my voice
never bet on tomorrow

July in January

Ice doesn't melt in freezing hands.
Melbourne summer begins fortnightly.

Build me a snowthing with coal for eyes.
The trains have stopped running just for a blink.

In time, the tracks will need replacing.
April was never the cruelest month.

This doesn't pour out of me, I have to force it
one day. Darling, our backyards will be rivers.

ice, coal, rivers in April
darling, our second summer will be freezing

In a Dying Forest of Needles

flattering canopy light #nofilter
a dying forest
of full-length mirrors

shadows crack
a beardless face stopped by a murder
of black birds

now wings, words
tips and branches, isosceles on a carpet
brown needles

I could die here
safely daily and never be found
of suicide

suicide could die of words
a flattering murder
of wings

ligneous	wood
fellers	quite quiet quite
felling	firm under
falling	dress
fellers	underdress
falling	under in under
felling	dress
feeling	un handle
falling	unhandled un
quite quiet	inhandle
quiet	in handle
quite quiet quit	in the handle
when	in the handle
when no one	handle in
when	the handle of the
when when no one	the handle
no when	of the axe
when no one	of the
is there is	axe of the
there	of the axe
is	i can't
there is	i can't quite
wood	i can't quit quite
wood wood	can't i can't quit
would	i can't
growing	i can't quite
	quit quite quiet qu

underdress in falling
felling falling
under wood i can't
no, when there is no
no
i can't, no

Veale Gardens

A secret lapsed on bending knee.
A cop who later danced, engrossed.
A wife who says I love you, twice.
A signal from a burning home.
A prick from landing on a thorn.
A face that dries to morning light.
A collar freed from lipstick smudge.
A phone call silenced by a palm.
An opening to sniff a void.
A species with an alien name.
A pair of rusted secateurs.
A greenhouse with a blistered pane.
A lover of a cigarette.
A wounded rose is left the same.

silenced by a greenhouse
little burning home
to fill a void i love you left

Meconium

We are trying harder to become more
like slugs. Carving out homes,
the fluid between
two fallacious genders. To change from one
to the other and back again. To live hard
in shells, coming out
only when mucus is thick
between fingers.

thick fluid is gender
to be more other
to live harder like coming

39^o +

Dreaming of scalpels and lifts and
shorts cut above the knee
to make us all nervous. Can I be honest
as a metaphor? Every day

I wake up a zombie moaning
for more sickly flesh,
lacking control when it comes to eating brains –
we don't talk with our arms
outstretched or groan 'master'
unless whipped.

Glazed eyes.

Tongues oversized.

There are no dresses.

That will fit these shoulders, no –

They don't make clothes for dead girls
like me.

glazed tongues
nervous flesh a metaphor
these sickly shoulders oversize
moaning

Watching Free-to-Air Television for Five Hours Straight After Having Slept Off a Migraine After a Therapy Session on the Second Thursday of the Month

Louis Theroux talks to slim girls. Surviving
more and less on fragments
of ossified cheese.

white noise

Sharp cheeks, temporary blindness
some unresolved issues, some not
unresolving

white noise

Blanche. Rose. Dorothy. Sophia.
The one about the haircuts about Blanche being
scared of lesbians about Sophia hating men
who wear turbans.

white noise

David Attenborough is flawed but shows us his fossils.
They are all extinct now. Their makers have all died
or been killed

white noise

Nigella makes another slow roast one pot wonder.
Lamb that falls off the bone. Potatoes, rosemary,
thick fat setting in a brand-name bowl.

white noise

white noise

Bettany Hughes speaks of Rosetta
in fragments – fabricating
words that now translate

white noise

Chris Lilley tells us his stories
of colour. An advertisement featuring two men
and a baby, but what was the product?

white noise

Six people in a single frame discuss the rights
of sex workers. Joey and Chandler aren't speaking
again.

white noise

A doctor explains hard truths
about red meat. Straight couples bite
the altar, committing to love for money.

Dune

Sharp gold silicone
fingering Saharan
flats, catch the big light – condensation
peanut butter.

You make us toast
spreading – existential
A train on a frock
Strawberry jam. You must be dreaming
wake up – keep coming over
all blue out of nowhere. Just hush.

Mango cellulite, bruised fruit faking
a lake in the dry, a dish, slept sound.
Dung beetles rolling shit uphill,
repeatedly. The wet patch – a slick marriage
and window steam – cool succulent.

A cheap kind of mustard, gripping at ankles.
Halfway down is near enough.
This trudge will take all year to solve.
Butter, scones, skylines
bead the horizon.

the wet patch is near
halfway down the flats
wake up. just hush. solve this marriage.

Joga ♥

every year i meet a fag
who still pores over *homo-*
genic and the genius of its
strings
every earth-breath beat
over full bottles
full bodies
we dissect we
neck wenches, broken hearts
the subtleties our scars
allow us to preserve, revisit
a slow melt wave
a crush of ice flesh
we burn coal with our expert
opinions
we be climate scientists of lust
we catch that fat
pink timbre
but only ever on pure black
vinyl, to hear the full suite of
stolen frequencies, each one
a stitch in my
fault

a fag, a crush
a stitch in my stolen pink
broken strings
the genius of slow bodies

Herpes

My scars taste swell, I've heard. Better even
than nostalgia and I'll never remember
which night was the culprit or the woman
at the clinic whose opinion flexed –
her eyes told me, blinkless –
I should have gone to the place down the street [],
that is where they treat people like me.

Outbreaks cause a headache and fatigue
flu-like indications a small patch of blisters that suckle
my other mouth
so I can't sit or feel lovable
for a week ballooning time to try
and remember who it was that made me
dirty and whether or not
they will appreciate the flowers.

appreciate me, blinkless
scars that taste like flowers.
my other mouth was better dirty –
nostalgia might have made me swell

Rock

I

I am kissing him against a glass
advertisement for dental hygiene

or something less
controversial. A man

a king perhaps, a rock/stones thrown.
He is missing my face,

in scratched glass.
Though my ankle bleeds

his ankle shows the glass woman
smiling, my teeth intact,

clenched
back to his place

in a hot London night (yeah right).
This suburb is hidden and grey, it seems

on these cobbled streets, our fingers
remain in light and I know

the back of my shoulder
like the back of my hand

cobbled fingers, stone glass teeth.
a man, a less controversial
something. i know i remain
clenched.

II

Substratum.

Elastic veins of gold.

Gloss, glare, gleam, glitter.

Old chip packets.

Pink and blue.

Toys, bits of bus stop.

Rotten teeth

spat in all those banned bags and Barbie™s'

melting hands.

A thousand bent machines.

Celluloid.

A new kind of

negative.

A new kind of

old

addiction paraphernalia, needles.

Waxed cups and condoms.

Things deemed art.

A face in acrylic.

Nails with tilted hearts.

Painted

formaldehyde, fake tits.

Stop signals.

Sequins and roads.

There are a thousand (million) ways

to compose

a globe

a new kind of art
gold celluloid negative
hearts, a globe of rotten
sequins

Synonyms for Womblike

Ants traverse my legs, only
when I'm a complete child. Taking off

my underwear to squat in puddles of brown
mud, letting it in. Walking it through the house

hoping for a smack, squeezing
muddy bravelegs into mum's thick pleather

boots, she doesn't wear lightly, doesn't
understand the message behind flatness

in heels like I do. Ants traverse my legs, still
I am five and squatting over a full body

mirror to see my arsehole for the first time
to see my future in mint.

I can already clean mud from cheap carpet,
can sacrifice an afternoon of bending

can think of ways to get out of trouble
at least until I'm clean. Ants

traverse my legs, I am thirty, bent
over the same looking glass, looking for something other

than cracked, dried mud, other than
plastic boots, other than my future –

womblike, watching assholes making mud
puddles from desert sands.

looking for a clean child, my future
doesn't house
i am plastic, hoping for a body

Glacier

I

cold nightclub thighs
this introvert deserves to lose control
music is a frequency evolved for thrust
everyone gathers like hot starlings

fingerfoot breathdrip colourshape linepupil veinhaze

substance is critical for a good time
catching strangers' sweat in wide open mouths
the salt content seasons, wordless
conversations are a true breeze

folliclelymph glandularbreath brokensublet systemburning

another banger-induced collapse
friction the hard heat between lives
palms melting into hair and how ear folds are new skin
ankle-deep in mondogreens
'scuse me ... while i kiss this guy

II

Tick tock little Greenland clock.
We are icebergs plunging – drip drip d

rip

Louisiana – almost drowned.

Bangladesh – a memory.
Tonga, Samoa, Nippon – *sayonara*.
Antarctica's threadbare.
My shrinking flag.

friction banger, ankle-deep in heat
new skin is critical, a true breeze
strangers melting into conversations
wordless – threadbare like memory

Anymore

I don't come on hard wood
dance floors anymore. Whisper this
adding image
machines of leaves for romance +
credibility. A cock metaphor
beside an oil-spill couplet
makes the work political. Think
of ways to make a stanza
without words. Ways to dance
without a body. There are several
so I throw my dried pens in the river
unworried as safety caps
allow the fish to breathe.

romance as safety, i
whisper hard political images: a cock
this fish, the oil-spill river

Consensus

In December our hands are regular.
They sweat apart on haunted summer streets.
It is our own damn fault, we know
we should have never left the house this close
to Christmas but we need the exposure. I am afraid
of cabin fever only slightly more than people
and these streets have become long
enough for me to use the
present perfect tense.

You are speaking at me with fervour
wet hands flailing like a heart attack.
It is no wonder I feel the heat of guilt
realising I haven't heard a word
you've said. I have been too busy composing poetry
in my head about the difference(s) between things
that are alive and things not.
Molecules to cells to clusters.
There is still no consensus.

Are you even listening to me? you ask
from three feet into the future. This is how I know you will
love me until dirt. Or until you are.

guilt is a long attack
dirt is perfect
are you even composing me?

River

I

after being rejected by the Red Cross blood donation service ... again

I am standing at an empty Red Cross
van being told for the tenth time
I am a man

who has sex with other men
and that this is why they will
not accept a rarity

my dirty blood. As always,
this is only partly true.
So I give it up easily, spitefully.

I let it into riverbeds
instead, the downward flow
all the while wondering

why this freshly pink water is
not screened for trash
before it is wasted.

reflecting eyes in a concrete drowning
karrawitra parri, we read your bridges
urban flth. the fat heat
of foreign fingers.

II

Karrawirra Parri

she sings a heavy bloodsong
Karrawirra Parri Karrawirra Parri
 this red gum river
 swerves reflecting concrete
 steel
faces
Stobie poles
 bridges
 eyes
 of foreign species
 drowning in the fat heat
 her flow

autumn, 1972
 dr george duncan
 endures his wet
 death –
 thrown by the filth and straight
 back
 again to make sure
 the footage was
 ripe for the evening
news

no conviction but
a triangle
 plaque. lazy law
reform and cumbersome
rewards.

a lonely gavel lies
 in forty fingers thick
 a line of black
 dust.

we read your name on the rainbow
now through skid marks
 footprints and urban
 stains. we read your name
 we read your name
 we read your names

a red cross is always screened for pink
other men accept my dirty blood, a river
that is only partly true

Hymn

He kept a framed image of Maggie Thatcher on his dorm wall
but I loved him anyway and even phoned
to say how sorry I was when she died. On Deptford High Street
mid-spring, nothing grows in a junkie beer garden.
'Ding Dong the Witch is Dead' raced straight
to number two in the charts.

We stole a trip
to Canterbury which is far away
in England, but the equivalent of here and just
down the road. The cathedral
is older than anything I've been before
in velvet, floor cushions for genu-
flecting. Closed eyelids. Heard detail in slight prayers.
Kneeling on prestige of silk
reaching for something harder
than a pew. I told him during service what I really thought of Madge
and he never opened up again except to compose himself
a hymn about crosses and how to suck
new wood in old churches.

velvet thacher

Eukaryotic

where [to live] what [to breathe]

a void the slit the sentence more acres ten
million slashed/burnt */breathing.* breath stale
darkpit matters. masses tissue. shaven tangled
lungs at mo sph ere asphyxia
under weight dreams of us */seeing*
/notseeing black cries black crying.

dreams of stale tangle
under the sentence of us

Woomera

Two of us ten and shirtless – a white quartz slope.
Chalk dust and sweat crumb our backs like a schnitzel.
The horizon is the furthest thing from us but we go there.
It will be ten more years before a sand filter breaks.
There is no need for shoes but we wear them to death.
We peel and burn.
Growing new skin gets thinner.
My fear of snakes is Born This Way™.
There used to be houses on all of these streets.
It is cheaper to crush a weatherboard shell.
White stucco hinting at a kind of permanence.
We broke the bomber shield with a single rock.
Pieces of space lie spread across cages.
The centre of town is filled like a ghost.
We stand just like children at an empty intersection.
Three hours of daylight go by without movement.
Twisted fingers help us with finding
exits, the roadhouse, towards the other horizon and farther.
I have never been back there, there have never been reasons. But
Google Maps keeps me dreaming of formative plants:
saltbush that grows in picturesque dryness.
Eucalypts older than my name.
The Money Tree we hid beneath in 40-degree heat.
Pants ankled. Stroking what little was down there.
With boyish fingers and black crow quill.

ghostlike children, older than my name
these streets are eucalypts
picturesque in black

A Christmas Poem on Mirtazapine ...

is the burden of an unwanted set
of socks, and we carry this state through, always
into the following year. In spite of charity
and, Jesus, I fucking hate Christmas
and these are simply the reasons:

1. Babies bending dolls' legs out of boxes.
2. Fresh torn tree-pattern paper.
3. The smell is nothing like fir.
4. My uncle's fist up a dead bird's arse.
5. I no longer eat butter or flesh.
6. Shortening.
7. Do not act upon your urges.
8. There is truly nothing wrong with what I've said.
9. They is plural.
10. It will be 40 degrees again.
11. My nephew will not look at me.
12. I do not want him to.
13. What is it you actually do, again?

I do like the sweets and filch some
in my purse for later. They will taste metallic
and like every other year
we will be judged for leaving
early and butterless and stockinged –
an uncle, or something like it.

Jesus will be 40 or something
like it, the plural of Christmas is
shortening
my uncle's first, the smell of earlier birds
dead babies in my purse for later

b i a e u t f t e t h e
i g s n l t o h r y t r
g o . c d i r e . c t m
t r u h . n m r r o r i
e a n . b g a n e n e n
r n d s i m l a s t e d
r g e t g o g m t i . m
a e r o t t a e i n b o
c f w n e h r . n e i t
o i e e r e d m g n g h
t n i s r r e o w t o e
t g g t a . n t i m r r
a e h a c l m h n o a n
m r t t o e o e e t n e
o s t u t a t r b h g v
t . r e t f h . o e e e
h d e s a p e o x r f r
e e e . h u r r m . i m
r a . n a l . a o u n i
. d w o i p n n t n g n
d u e r r m o g h d e d
r m t u . o n e e e r m
e b a s b t a . r r s o
s r r t i h m m . w . t
s e s . g e e o e e n h
. l e m s r m t m i e e
b l b o i . o h p g v r

name
leaf pulp
wine box
dead
mother mother
watching
garden form

Redress

after Nurse's Uniform, Health Sciences Collection, University of Adelaide.

It is a heavy cotton, twill
type fabric lying
dead as a metal weapon. Shaping
more than a body, a post-war body
nonetheless. Rummaged
in off-white bleached pleats.

Possibly, possibly, probably
eulogised in Ps.
In secrecy I put it on me
twirling queerly in a boneyard.

In an instant we are
matrons of the Home
for the Incurables. Smearing plum
cheek kisses / cold wrinkles.

Faces swollen hard
soft skin. All traces of red
removed or vanished.

heavy post-war body
smearing pleats of bonnyard skin
soft home of the cold

Notes on Netflix & Styx

this is all
(very titillating)

an upload (here)
a blind spot
in my digital periphery

there, it's a great life
to stare through so many
open windows

no such thing as time wasted
these ideas are all fresh
followers

blogging about power
is new pastoral
the internet
is bad for you
just ask it

abraded by numbers
(stygian ones)
watching Netflix
'til the candles
tsk tsk

heated
piles of second
hand books keep
the door ajar and keep
the flood at bay and keep
the old knowledge distant
as risk

old books are the internet, wasted
candles
my digital power is fresh
as the flood

Yes and I told Him that our blood is not unclean yes and they thought of us only as cocks in arses and other holes yes glorious yes and I wore dresses as far back as the fence yes every day yes those boots that came yes to my inner thigh yes they made a tapping sound yes on my inner thigh yes on the kitchen floor yes on the empty pool yes it is hard to say yes whether I am one or the other yes it is hard yes to say whether yes these images will never be hung yes on walls in fancy frames yes never hung yes the dust has settled now yes across a thousand sweat-drenched nightclubs yes and there is so much glitter in everyone's shit yes we are not simply light entertainment yes we are not daytime tv yes we are not Ave Maria yes we are not white cake and gifts yes we are not a disclaimer on an empty packet yes your grinning makes us sour yes we will no longer wear the veil yes we will never touch your children yes we are not always in ecstasy yes we are not the blood of birds yes we are not a candelabra yes we are not drippings of hot wax yes we are not a muted scale yes and there were many stains on his sheets yes and it was a war yes a war of art yes and the whole community came together yes with raised flags and high voices yes high voices yes raised flags yes we were never never a swollen trope yes we will not make the finale yes we are not the woman or the man yes we are still never holding hands in the street yes and perhaps we were not Born This Way yes we were made this way yes scarred by words yes and being told yes no yes we will continue to win yes and we are not all dying yes but we all are yes.

these images of white cake
artwork dying on the kitchen floor
our blood is daytime glitter

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I live and work on stolen Kurna country. I pay my respects to Kurna elders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty was never ceded: always was, always will be.

Firstly, thank you to Jill Jones for your guidance, mentorship and support throughout the years, especially during the making of this manuscript from its inception to print and for introducing me to several of the poets who inspired works in this collection. Thank you to Cordite Books, especially Kent MacCarter, without whom this book would not have been possible. You provide a safe space for creative minds to wander and your pragmatism and ability to reel me in where necessary are greatly appreciated. Thank you to Howard Firkin and the editors at In Case of Emergency Press who published my first chapbook, *Lightly, on the Skin*. Thank you to the Adelaide poetry community, particularly Olivia De Zilva, Banjo James and Dom Symes, for continually inviting me back to road-test several of these pieces.

To Schatzi, thank you, my truest love, for everything. This would not have happened without you. You see the artist in me and relentlessly coax them out.

To Mum and Dad, for allowing me to wander and wonder – I love you.

To all the human and non-human people in my life – I love you.

To all the plants in my garden, even the ones that don't make it – I love you.

To the lands on which I live, work and visit – I'm sorry.

I thank the editors of the following anthologies and journals, in which a number of these poems previously appeared: *Cordite Poetry Review*, *In Your Hands*, *Meniscus*, *One Last Poem*, *Pink Cover Zine*, *Queer Modern Poets*, *Rabbit* and *SWAMP*.

Thank you

Em König is a poet and musician who lives and works on stolen Kaurna country. Their work can be found online, in print, in closets, under floorboards and drowning in the rising oceans. They are one half of the electronic music duo GIRL and work solo under the name Nina in Ecstasy.