

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Jennifer O'Grady: "At Westside Women's Pavilion" & "Rabbit"

Jennifer O'Grady · Thursday, June 13th, 2013

Jennifer O'Grady is the author of *White*, which won the Mid-List Press First Series Award and was published by Mid-List Press in 1999. Her poetry has appeared widely, in such places as *Harper's*, *Poetry*, *The Yale Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Southwest Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Antioch Review* and many other journals. Her poems have been anthologized and selected for *Poetry Daily* and *The Writer's Almanac* with Garrison Keillor.

*Cultural Weekly is proud to premiere these new poems by Jennifer O'Grady.*

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### At Westside Women's Pavilion

I remember a door, white door. Handprints on it.

*This is not good news*, she said.

Not the taxi ride, the conversation. Just the door.

*I don't see anything there*, she said.

A waiting room, everyone young,  
everyone almost a child and me

almost dead. Well, something  
inside me dead. That much I knew.

*We don't do this in our office*, she said  
and handed me a shiny pink brochure,  
one corner gone like a bite.

A paper gown, paper slippers.

I thought, How will I walk  
without tearing them?

*Sorry*, she said. *Sorry*  
she said. And smiled.

In the room a girl,  
fourteen perhaps, looked at me.

*Don't worry*, she said. *It's not bad.*

*They're nice*. I looked at her,  
she looked at me, her pupils

lit by the filthy fluorescent  
hanging like a casket from the dropped ceiling  
covered in dull white fire-retardant  
sound-reduction tiles.

*At least we know it can happen*, she said,  
*It's conceivable*. No pun intended.  
 Next, they said and she went,  
 sucking a lollipop.  
*See you in another six weeks*, she said  
 as she closed the door.  
*Next*, they said. *Next*, they said.  
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## Rabbit

There is something  
 not quite right  
 about this, the container  
 where he eats, sleeps, defecates, lies  
 with ruinous abandon  
 or in a dull stupor,  
 unable to tell us  
 which, if either;  
 amid wisps of hay, the now  
 flowerless broccoli, stems  
 untouched, all we had  
 today in the fridge;  
 nibbling the pellets  
 of who knows what  
 we give him, chewing  
 the plastic bars  
 in periodic frustration  
 or lusty enjoyment,  
 long ungainly feet  
 stretched out behind him  
 not unlike the keychain  
 I had as a child,  
 good luck charm, piece  
 of some unlucky being  
 I carried like a wounded  
 directionless compass,  
 exploring the sensation  
 of owning bone and fur  
 as we do now, owning  
 up to it at least, buying  
 his food, his cage, toys  
 (mostly unused), treats, him—  
 and where do we go  
 from here, where does it  
 lead us, such captivity,  
 if not to the outer reaches  
 of ourselves  
 where distance

or ambiguity  
whisper that he is  
much better off,  
he is safe, as we watch  
the moist protruding eyes  
watch us: strange creatures  
doing everything  
and nothing at all.

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