

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.

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.

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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