



White: Poems

Jennifer O'Grady

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Jennifer O'Grady's first collection deservedly won the Midlist First Series Award for Poetry. It is a slim volume, which reveals a wide range of interests and perspectives of her writer's universe. She moves easily from the work of the "Moths" with their "curious filaments" and their ability to leave woolens "full of missing pieces" to subjects such as "Susannah and the Elders," (reference to a painting by Gentileshi) in which she speaks of "anguish dressed in baroque repose" and explores the projected emotions of a woman with a rape in her past as she watches the moment of decision in Susannah's eternal present. It is this pattern of juxtaposing one view against another or of turning one way of thinking into its opposite—or at least its "other"—which makes her mark.

Readers will also enjoy several short lyric pieces rich with extended metaphor. An example is "Port of Call" in which she observes, "How very long it's taken to unload/the sharp black freight of the heart." Various art forms live in many of these poems, from painting to opera, but so do such diverse subjects as astronomy, surrealism and the blue herons—though even the herons remind her of "angles in Renaissance paintings."

In *White* there is glittering intelligence focused often on the way art reflects the workings of the heart. This is a sophisticated collection appealing to general readers of poetry, as well as people who love to read about the human connection to the world of art.

ANNE-MARIE OOMEN (May / June 1999)

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