

In the Taxi to the MRI

Category: Poems

written by Rachel Hadas | October 24, 2008

Rachel Hadas

I try to concentrate on the weather. Everything
deliquesces into simile.
Sleet ticks onto the windshield like a clock.
Truth blinks on/off like a stuck traffic signal.
It is better to live in the light but the light is flickering.
Anything more than the truth would have seemed too weak-
Poetic paradox understood too late
or maybe just in time. What time is it?
A small white poodle in a quilted coat
lifts a leg to pee against a hydrant
on Sixtieth Street, and we are nearly there,
early, of course. And since (she said) my heart
has been wrung out, no, broken, this is the ...
this has to be ... The sentence will not end.
The mind pulls, stretches, struggles, and returns
not to any absolute beginning
but a blank wall. Is there a door in it?
A future? How to get there? And once there
how to escape? When flickering stops and steady
light shines, that may be the worst of all.
Anything more than the truth would have seemed too weak,
but mercifully the blinking begins again.

About the poet:

Rachel Hadas is board of governors professor of English, Newark campus, Rutgers University. The latest of her many books of poems is *The River of Forgetfulness* (David Robert, 2006); *Classics* (WordTech Communications), a volume of selected prose, was published in 2007. Her website is www.rachelhadas.com.

About the poem:

"My husband's MRI signaled the early stages of the process of diagnosing a progressive dementia. Even before he took the test, I instinctively knew the news would not be good. Poetry helps me to understand what I am feeling and thinking; it helps me to not feel overwhelmed and purely reactive. I would be delighted were the poem to prove of help to anyone."

Poetry editors:

Judy Schaefer and Johanna Shapiro