



Beyond Words: Illness and the Limits of Expression (Literature and Medicine)

Kathlyn Conway

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"Kathlyn Conway opens primordial questions about the shattering events of illness through close readings of selected illness narratives, proposing that only writing of a daring kind can utter the knowledge of the self-telling body. Wielding her ferocious intellect and braving exposure to self and other, Conway makes original discoveries about writing and illness and, more stunningly, about writing and life. Not a book about illness, this is a book about writing and being. It is taut, brave, unequalled in our scholarship, and true. Conway joins our most powerful investigators of the human predicament of mortality, helping us to see, helping us to live."--Rita Charon, Columbia University, Program in Narrative Medicine

Published accounts of illness and disability often emphasize hope and positive thinking: the woman who still looked beautiful after losing her hair, the man who ran five miles a day during chemotherapy. This acclaimed examination of the genre of the illness narrative questions that upbeat approach. Author Kathlyn Conway, a three-time cancer survivor and herself the author of an illness memoir, believes that the triumphalist approach to writing about illness fails to do justice to the shattering experience of disease. By wrestling with the challenge of writing about the reality of serious illness and injury, she argues, writers can offer a truer picture of the complex relationship between body and mind.

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