
POETRY | FALL 2013

In the Botanical Garden at Golden Gate Park

By Leatha Kendrick

Everywhere, cups of light – canna, calla, water-
lilies' pointed petals doubled by reflection.
A whirring like the holy ghost, like time
spinning outward distills a heron from the air –
grace in its angular shape. All at once there,
quiet as sculpture.

The terror of its arrival settles to wonder.
Our hearts slow. He's close enough
to touch. We're nearer death now,
two sisters, a daughter carrying the rest
of our picnic lunch, and death
turns out to be less

punctual, less startling than this bird
alighting in a storm of wings – is turning
out, in fact, to be piecemeal, partial
in the way it gnaws our knees, chews
away our father's flesh, worrying him
to a falter,

a stick figure in a cartoon life
strewn with pieces of what
he used to be. For now we stand
among unhurried towers of sequoia,
a continent away from loss in the long
light of a summer evening,
flowers blooming at our backs.

Leatha Kendrick, who is the author of three volumes of poetry, leads workshops in poetry and life writing at the Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning, a community literary center in Lexington, Kentucky. Her fiction, poetry and essays appear widely in journals and anthologies, including *The Southern Poetry Anthology, Volume III: Contemporary Appalachia; What Comes Down to Us Twenty-Five Contemporary Kentucky Poets; Listen Here: Women Writing in Appalachia; and I to I: Life Writing by Kentucky Feminists*. Two of her books of poetry, *Science in Your Own Backyard* and *Second Opinion*, are indexed in NYU's *Literature, Arts, and Medicine* database.

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