



The Swing Girl: Poems

Katherine Soniat

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In the title poem of *The Swing Girl*, a Greek burial relic with an image of a small child on her swing suggests the ability to move between present culture and the ghosts of history, between modern metaphor and the rhetoric of myth. Katherine Soniat celebrates this fluidity and the detached yet vulnerable perception that comes with it: “The territory that girl could cover, her eyes peering birdlike / across the grove. The air, a vector.”

Soniat’s new collection contemplates the present through the fragmented lens of history. She swings the reader out across time, to ancient Greece and China, and into the chaos of contemporary war in Serbia and Iraq. The ever-changing point of view disorients, so that ultimately even the daylight overhead seems uncertain: “. . . the far smear of daylight, granular and moony.” Loss provides the substance of history and myth, sounding the dark, minor key of elegy for lives and geographies cracking under pressure.

In Soniat’s poems the precarious puzzle of this world shatters, only to begin again in startling new ways: “The story of the mountain always points somewhere / else, elusive as the tawny lion disappearing behind / the next high crag.”

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