

Women for the World

by Ellen Doré Watson

She draws crowds or fire. An oak, she towers.
She forewarns, she floors, she's sieve, she's oars
—all whirl and brimming—living for the world.
She's 13, first in her family to say AIDS out loud.
She's mopping nuclear meltdown at 69. She sun-
screens orphaned elephants' ears—knows mother
is shade. Thick-armed or reedy, she splits atoms,
invents windshield wipers, white-out. She labors
in the bush the hut the tub the ward. She delivers.
Exponentially. She sisters. She gives us Hospice,
Kevlar, the Mars Rover, the bra. Carriers of water,
keepers of memories or bees. At 10, circumcised,
about to be wed, she spills hot tea in his lap, grows up
to write her memoir from jail—with eyeliner on t.p.
She will not be forbidden the world. Game-changers,
gene-mappers, those who build bridges, who are bridges,
who get the story told. Sharp- or honey-tongued, she
legals, loyals, triages, stops the superhighway. She sings
herself, and everyone. Flecked with paint or pain, knee-
deep in the way out or in. She drives. We women—elected,
reflecting, dissecting, refracting—ignition for the world.