

KELLY STREET PARK

By Steve Rodriguez

In another life I am a sprawling
stretch of grass and benches and playful venues.
People can run for miles within my borders.
I am Central Park, and I sit at the center of the Universe.
The city must go through me,
or maneuver around my four busy, distant corners.
Host of Holden's carousel,
I also boast of summer Shakespeare in the Park.
And on Thanksgiving Day, marching bands must first serenade
along my perimeter before proceeding down to Macy's.

But today, in fact, I am a pocket-sized park in Linda Vista.
Small, tucked away
in a corner;
—boxed in—
by apartment buildings and the canyon.
Largely ignored, or avoided, or “never heard of” by most.
I host gang graffiti, and the homeless trekking up from Tecolote.
Community clean-ups are held on my behalf.

True, sit at my edges
and take in the dramatic vistas produced by the Eocene Age.
You'll not be disappointed.

But the truth is, mixed emotions prevail.

While my trees dispense a cooling shade,
neighborhood families fear what lurks in the shadows.

I suggest you stop by.
Then listen.
Deep into the night, you'll hear the coyote yips,
And the occasional gunshot.

I remain a study in contrast.