

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,
Maine Poet Laureate*

Kate Barnes of Union, who was Maine's first official poet laureate, passed away last month. Her poetry, however, lives on, known to readers by its intimate tone, its attention to nature, and a third characteristic she once said was common to all poetry: "the trancelike effect of language artfully used." Today's poem commemorates Kate and her beautiful work.

Where the Deer Were

by Kate Barnes

It's always hard to form a true picture
of what's happening, isn't it?
Difficult to know what's what.

For instance,
the moving tenderness of the desiring man,
the gentle vanity of the desired woman
sliding their bare arms together
in the grass across the stream.

It's late summer,
a misty day, but warm.

I can't see their faces.
So what is happening, really?
Perhaps they are fighting—very evenly.
Perhaps those sounds are groans of pain.

Now the mist
closes my eyes.

When it lifts once more,
I see nothing over there
but a hollow in the long grass
like the places where deer have been lying,
and the only thing I hear
is shallow water making excuses to stone.

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