

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

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

The late Haines Tate of Waterville died of breast cancer in 2012, two years after the recurrence of her illness. In her collection *Strata* she explores, among other themes, the difficulties faced by cancer victims. This week's brave poem is from that book.

### Keepsake

*by Haines Sprunt Tate*

In her breast they found a density.  
Sounds they made against her body,  
even sounds she could not hear,  
would not go through it.

She would place one finger there  
or there—her wishing would dissolve it.  
It would melt away with the many months,  
the many months of snow, it would melt away.

It was oh nothing, air,  
or a piece of her that escaped loving,  
a story she'd told no one, a fluid tale  
hardened like a stone under her skin.

They told her no harm, no harm,  
it was not what she could fear.  
This ache was rootless, self-contained.  
They said she would feel nothing

but their touch, she would not sleep  
and when they opened her she would be  
there and nowhere, and after it remember  
nothing. For all their work they said

she'd keep one thin, thin scar.

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