American Life in Poetry: Column 818

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

We have lots of poets who would enjoy being described as “a poet first, and a (fill in the job) second, as if for them writing poems is the most important thing in their lives. As I see it, Patricia Frolander is, instead, a widowed Wyoming ranch manager, a loving mother and grandmother first, and a poet, second. I like those priorities. Here’s a poem about the loss of her rancher husband of many years. It’s from her book Second Wind, from High Plains Press.

Dream Watch

I softly call your name as I slip into the stand of wheat, fifty-five acres of gold. Careful not to shell the seed, my aged hands push ripened stems aside.

You must be here for you love the fullness of a crop. Yards farther, I call again. The hawk above must wonder at the trails through the field.

Did you leave with the winnowing scythe, the burning heat of August? For some good reason, I cannot find you here, amid the nightly dreams and tear-damp pillow.