

August 2021

1988 Introductory Speech by Angela Bowen for Kate Rushin receiving the Grolier Poetry Prize

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Recommended Citation

Bowen, Angela (2021). 1988 Introductory Speech by Angela Bowen for Kate Rushin receiving the Grolier Poetry Prize. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 22(8), 75-76.

Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol22/iss8/32>

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now
I want to say a few personal words
about our dear Kate

INTRO FOR KATE

BACK IN 1982, ALONG WITH THOUSANDS OF OTHER FEMINISTS, I DISCOVERED KATE RUSHIN FOR THE FIRST TIME. I REMEMBER READING THE FIRST TWO LINES OF THE BRIDGE POEM, THEN STOPPING TO LOOK BACK TO SEE WHO THIS WOMAN WAS. IT SAID, DONNA KATE RUSHIN. I SAID HMMM, HMMM, HMMM, THE WOMAN IS BAAAD.

A YEAR OR SO LATER, I CAME TO VISIT BOSTON AND ATTENDED AN EVENING THAT MAXINE FELDMAN HAD PUT TOGETHER TO HONOR LESBIANS IN THE BOSTON COMMUNITY. I DON'T REMEMBER EXACTLY WHERE IT TOOK PLACE, BUT THE PLACE WAS PACKED, AND I REMEMBER SITTING IN THE BALCONY LOOKING AROUND, AND HEARD SOMEONE SAY OH, THERE'S KATE RUSHIN. I TURNED TO JENNIFER AND SAID, IS THAT DONNA KATE RUSHIN? SHE SAID, I WOULD THINK SO, I CAN'T IMAGINE THERE'D BE TWO WITH SUCH A SIMILAR NAME. SHE WAS SITTING VERY SERENELY HOLDING HER COLLECTION OF WRITING, AND I SAID TO MYSELF, DAMN, SHE'S ALSO FINE... AND SHE READ SOME OF HER POETRY, AND IT WAS GREAT. *hearing it was*

greater
adults
A YEAR OR SO LATER, I MOVED HERE AND BEGAN GETTING TO KNOW KATE. IT'S HARD NOT TO KNOW KATE IF YOU'RE IN THE BOSTON/~~CAMBRIDGE~~ FEMINIST COMMUNITY. SHE'S EVERYWHERE. SHE'S IN NEW WORDS BOOKSTORE, WHICH PLAYS A VERY LARGE PART IN THE WOMEN'S COMMUNITY. SHE DOES WOMEN'S COMMUNITY RADIO. SHE TEACHES *she writes for our newspaper* WRITING. SHE DOES POET-IN-THE-SCHOOLS. AND NO MATTER WHO ASKS HER TO READ, SOMEHOW, SHE SEEMS TO ALWAYS FIND THE TIME. SHE'S REALLY WONDER WOMAN IN DISGUISE, YOU KNOW?

AND BESIDES ALL THAT, SHE'S SUCH A SUPPORTIVE FRIEND. ONE OF MY GOOD MEMORIES OF THE LAST FEW YEARS IS OF THE TIME KATE SPENT WITH JENNIFER AND ME IN AFRICA DURING THE DECADE OF WOMEN CONFERENCE IN 1985. SHE'S THERE WHEN YOU NEED HER, AS I'M SURE MANY OF US HERE TODAY WOULD TESTIFY IF WE WEREN'T VERY AWARE OF HOW EMBARRASSED SHE'D BE.

2

I 'VE BEEN IN TWO WRITING GROUPS WITH HER, AND ALWAYS FOUND HER CRITICISMS THOUGHTFUL, ANALYTICAL, CAREFUL AND KIND, AS IS HER JOURNALISTIC WRITING. BUT WITTY. PITHY. AND RIGHT ON TARGET. IN ALL THE YEARS I'VE KNOWN HER, THOUGH, WE WORKED TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER ON AN EVENT THAT TOOK PLACE JUST TWO WEEKS AGO. WE WORKED TOGETHER ON BRINGING SIMON NKOLI, A BLACK GAY SOUTH AFRICAN ACTIVIST TO OUR COMMUNITY. WE HAD LESS THAN SIX WEEKS TO PULL IT OFF, AND WE ALL WORKED LIKE FIENDS. AND KATE'S ENERGY WAS VERY INSTRUMENTAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THAT EVENT. SO HERE'S THIS WOMAN, JUGGLING IT ALL, AND DOING IT WITH STYLE, AS AUDRE LORDE, OUR POET LAUREATE OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT, SAYS. AUDRE ADMIRES KATE'S WORK ~~ALSO~~. IN FACT, TODAY, IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT SHE'S IN ST. CROIX JUST MOVING BACK INTO HER HOUSE AND CLEANING UP FROM THE HURRICANE, AUDRE LORDE AND GLORIA JOSEPH CALLED WITH CONGRATULATIONS FOR KATE. AUDRE LIKES TO TALK ABOUT DOING YOUR WORK AND YOUR LIFE WITH STYLE. AND THAT'S DEFINITELY WHAT KATE DOES. SO IT'S WITH THE DEEPEST HEARTFELT HONOR I PRESENT TO YOU THE WINNER OF THE GROLIER POETRY PRIZE, POET KATE RUSHIN.

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