

GRETCHEN STEELE PRATT

**Where Once Deer Have Slept**

Let me just have missed them, flank-warm brush matted down.  
The tick of grasses, unburdened, righting themselves in the sun—  
Let orchard grass, dropseed, the sweet grass, let the wild rye.  
Autumn comes down through the grasses, the hidden gray hives  
Of scrubland. Let hangover, let sunburn, let the eye  
Wish for a sail, for a horizon's new deepwater windmills.  
Gray shingles blackened with dew. The numinous  
Cannot be planned. The thicket un-nests in the warm front  
Of their waking, the antlered air velvet, branching.  
Let me just have missed them—gone now through  
Towering cattails, the clacking reeds, a saltmeadow clearing.