

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

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

An ode, says Webster's dictionary, is a poetic song marked by exaltation of feeling. The feeling of today's ode by Peter Harris of Waterville is inspired by the transformation of seeds into popcorn.

Ode to Popcorn

by Peter Harris

I pour the shape-shifters
out of the old Mason jar into the pan.
The color of honey, sleek
in their pile of steamlined sibs,
not one of them cares if they're on top,
no rivalries, no grasping,
nothing falsified from skin to core,
no hint about what's pent inside
their quarter inch of seed,
that only gets expressed
when, as now, they're being boiled in oil.

Soon they'll snap the strappings of their haiku form,
explode ten times their size,
go wild, expressionist; no two the same:
fist, cloud, snapdragon, cauliflower,
elephant man, barnacle, meringue, a bowl
of almost weightless meteors,
an orchestra of mutant trumpets
all playing off-white tunes, although,
in each, their husk remains, in caves
or sunk in sockets like weird eyes.

For flakes like these, no way back
to raindrop symmetry. A little salt and butter,
then on to meet their call: to melt
in mouths that crave a hint of paradise.

Take Heart: A Conversation in Poetry is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. Poem copyright © Peter Harris. Reprinted from *Freeing the Hook*, Deerbrook Editions, 2014, by permission of Peter Harris. Questions about submitting to *Take Heart* may be directed to Gibson Fay-LeBlanc, Special Consultant to the Maine Poet Laureate, at mainepoetlaureate@gmail.com or 207-228-8263. *Take Heart: Poems from Maine, an anthology collecting the first two years of this column*, is now available from Down East Books.