

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

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

Who is the mysterious figure from the past in today's sonnet, notable only for failure? The late Robert Siegel of South Berwick challenges us to see through the disparaging view of the man's contemporaries, and to name him.

### A Notable Failure

*by Robert Siegel*

He never went abroad to broaden him  
and though he learned to read, he did not write  
anything worth saving. Once, at a whim,  
he scribbled something they hadn't gotten right

in the sand and erased it. Few could know  
whether to credit any of the vulgar rumors  
surrounding his birth in a shed. There were low  
whispers and a gap of thirty years.

Then more rumors trickled through the countryside  
about the artisan's son turned wonderworker:  
probably a charlatan—blasphemer to be sure. Wide-eyed,  
some claimed he raised the dead (and healed lepers!)  
before the Romans nailed him—as they nailed all such—  
and the neighbors sniffed, “He didn't come to much!”

---

*Take Heart: A Conversation in Poetry* is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. Poem copyright © 2006 Robert Siegel. Reprinted from *Pentecost of Finches: New and Selected Poems*, Paraclete Press, 2006, by permission of Ann Siegel. Questions about submitting to *Take Heart* may be directed to Gibson Fay-LeBlanc, Special Consultant to the Maine Poet Laureate, at [mainepoetlaureate@gmail.com](mailto: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.