Readers of this famous poem by Edwin Arlington Robinson often remark about the figure of the miller, who is depressed because the changes of the modern world have tossed him aside. But Robinson’s real focus is the miller’s wife, brooding about his depression and thinking her own dark thoughts.

The Mill

*by Edwin Arlington Robinson*

The miller’s wife had waited long,
   The tea was cold, the fire was dead;
And there might yet be nothing wrong
   In how he went and what he said:
“There are no millers any more,”
   Was all that she had heard him say;
And he had lingered at the door
   So long that it seemed yesterday.

Sick with a fear that had no form
   She knew that she was there at last;
And in the mill there was a warm
   And mealy fragrance of the past.
What else there was would only seem
   To say again what he had meant;
And what was hanging from a beam
   Would not have heeded where she went.

And if she thought it followed her,
   She may have reasoned in the dark
That one way of the few there were
   Would hide her and would leave no mark:
Black water, smooth above the weir
   Like starry velvet in the night,
Though ruffled once, would soon appear
   The same as ever to the sight.

_Take Heart: A Conversation in Poetry_ is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. This poem is in the public domain. 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.