

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

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

In today's poem Rachel Flynn of Gorham combines a description of a merganser on a lake with a commentary about persistence.

### On Wanting Only One Thing

*by Rachel Contreni Flynn*

*for Patrick*

This morning the hooded merganser  
appears lazy on the lake, puckered feet tucked  
beneath her rump so she's just coasting,  
just carving with the cargo of her body

a sloppy channel through snake grass,  
silent as a handbag. The merganser pays  
no attention to kites swooping in the spruce,  
loons keening in the coves, or cormorants

airing their wings on the shore. The merganser  
never swivels her head for sleep or grief  
or even grooming, so it seems she might be stupid  
or nearly dead. But then, at the bright twist

of fin beneath her, her soul becomes a syringe.  
She unhinges her joints into sleek steel,  
plunges through cold water, small heart soaring,  
mind clenched behind hopeful, topaz eyes.

---

*Take Heart: A Conversation in Poetry* is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. Poem copyright © 2005 Rachel Contreni Flynn. Reprinted from *Ice, Mouth, Song*, Tupelo Press, 2005, by permission of Rachel Contreni Flynn. Questions about *Take Heart*, which is no longer accepting submissions, 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.