TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair, Maine Poet Laureate

The late Philip Booth of Castine had his own way with free verse, creating his music from the repetition of words and their placement on the page. Today's poem, about the realities of old age, provides a striking example.

Old

By Philip Booth

Old, the old know cause to be bitter:
they've seen
their children (as if they could tell)
insist they are growing deaf:
they've found
old friends invent new friends
to prove the old don't matter:
they have hardened
themselves to let memory rust out;
with only themselves to hold on to,
they have grown
beyond any surprise;
to get their way
they have aged again
to be children:
beyond control, they have gained
control
of every last life save their own.
They know it can get no better.

Take Heart: A Conversation in Poetry is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. Poem copyright © 1990 by Philip Booth. Reprinted from Selves, *Penguin Publishing, 1990, by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc. Questions about submitting to Take Heart may be directed to David Turner, Special Assistant to the Maine Poet Laureate, at poetlaureate@mainewriters.org or 207-228-8263.*