

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, THE POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE

Descriptive poetry depends for its effects in part upon the vividness of details. Here the Virginia poet, Claudia Emerson, describes the type of old building all of us have seen but may not have stopped to look at carefully. And thoughtfully.

Stable

One rusty horseshoe hangs on a nail
above the door, still losing its luck,
and a work-collar swings, an empty
old noose. The silence waits, wild to be
broken by hoofbeat and heavy
harness slap, will founder but remain;
while, outside, above the stable,
eight, nine, now ten buzzards swing low
in lazy loops, a loose black warp
of patience, bearing the blank sky
like a pall of wind on mourning
wings. But the bones of this place are
long picked clean. Only the hayrake's
ribs still rise from the rampant grasses.

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