

# AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006  
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## American Life in Poetry: Column 126

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

The British writer Virginia Woolf wrote about the pleasures of having a room of one's own. Here the Vermont poet Karin Gottshall shows us her own sort of private place.

### The Raspberry Room

It was solid hedge, loops of bramble and thorny  
as it had to be with its berries thick as bumblebees.  
It drew blood just to get there, but I was queen  
of that place, at ten, though the berries shook like fists  
in the wind, daring anyone to come in. I was trying  
so hard to love *this* world--real rooms too big and full  
of worry to comfortably inhabit--but believing I was born  
to live in that cloistered green bower: the raspberry patch  
in the back acre of my grandparents' orchard. I was cross-  
stitched and beaded by its fat, dollmaker's needles. The effort  
of sliding under the heavy, spiked tangles that tore  
my clothes and smeared me with juice was rewarded  
with space, wholly mine, a kind of room out of  
the crush of the bushes with a canopy of raspberry  
dagger-leaves and a syrup of sun and birdsong.  
Hours would pass in the loud buzz of it, blood  
made it mine--the adventure of that red sting singing  
down my calves, the place the scratches brought me to:  
just space enough for a girl to lie down.

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