

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY © 2006 THE POETRY FOUNDATION WEBSITE: WWW.AMERICANLIFEINPOETRY.ORG CONTACT: ALP@POETRYFOUNDATION.ORG

American Life in Poetry: Column 639

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

One of my favorite poems is Louise Bogan's "The Crossed Apple" which mentions two species, Meadow Milk and Sweet Burning, and since reading it many years ago I have made notes of the names of apples, a poet's delight. In this touching poem by Cathryn Essinger, who lives in Ohio, I've come upon yet another for my collection. Her most recent book is *What I Know About Innocence* from Main Street Rag press.

Summer Apples

I planted an apple tree in memory
of my mother, who is not gone,

but whose memory has become
so transparent that she remembers

slicing apples with her grandmother
(*yellow apples; blue bowl*) better than

the fruit that I hand her today. Still,
she polishes the surface with her thumb,

holds it to the light and says with no
hesitation, *Oh, Yellow Transparent . . .*

*they're so fragile, you can almost see
to the core.* She no longer remembers how

to roll the crust, sweeten the sauce, but
her desire is clear—it is pie that she wants.

And so, I slice as close as I dare to the core—
to that little cathedral to memory—where

the seeds remember everything they need
to know to become yellow and transparent.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation (www.poetryfoundation.org), publisher of *Poetry* magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Poem copyright ©2016 by Cathryn Essinger, "Summer Apples," from *Alaska Quarterly*

Review, (Vol 33, No. 1 & 2, 2016). Poem reprinted by permission of Cathryn Essinger and the publisher. Introduction copyright ©2017 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

American Life in Poetry ©2006 The Poetry Foundation
Contact: alp@poetryfoundation.org
This column does not accept unsolicited poetry.