

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

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

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY © 2005 THE POETRY FOUNDATION WEBSITE: WWW.AMERICANLIFEINPOETRY.ORG CONTACT: ALP@POETRYFOUNDATION.ORG

American Life in Poetry: Column 018

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE

Every reader of this column has at one time felt the frightening and paralyzing powerlessness of being a small child, unable to find a way to repair the world. Here the California poet, Dan Gerber, steps into memory to capture such a moment.

The Rain Poured Down

My mother weeping
in the dark hallway, in the arms of a man,
not my father,
as I sat at the top of the stairs unnoticed—
my mother weeping and pleading for what I didn't know
then and can still only imagine—
for things to be somehow other than they were,
not knowing what I would change,
for, or to, or why,
only that my mother was weeping
in the arms of a man not me,
and the rain brought down the winter sky
and hid me in the walls that looked on,
indifferent to my mother's weeping,
or mine,
in the rain that brought down the dark afternoon.

Dan Gerber's most recent book is "Trying to Catch the Horses" (Michigan State University Press, 1999).
"The Rain Poured Down" copyright © 2005 by Dan Gerber and reprinted by permission of the author. This
weekly column is supported by The Poetry Foundation, The Library of Congress and the Department of
English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

American Life in Poetry ©2005 The Poetry Foundation

Contact: alp@poetryfoundation.org

This column does not accept unsolicited poetry.