

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Here's a poem by an Indiana poet, Shari Wagner, that has a delightful time describing the many sounds of running water.

Creek-Song

It begins in a cow lane
with bees and white clover,
courses along corn, rushes
accelerando against rocks.
It rises to a teetering pitch
as I cross a shaky tree-bridge,
syncopates a riff
over the dissonance
of trash—derelict icebox
with a missing door,
mohair loveseat sinking
into thistle. It winds through green
adder's mouth, faint as the bells
of Holsteins heading home.
Blue shadows lengthen,
but the undertow
of a harmony pulls me on
through raspy Joe-pye-weed
and staccato-barbed fence.
It hums in a culvert
beneath cars, then empties
into a river that flows oboe-deep
past Indian dance ground, waterwheel
and town, past the bleached
stones in the churchyard,
the darkening hill.

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