

# 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 524

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

I don't think I've ever sold anything that, later, I didn't wish I had back, and I have a list of regrets as long as my arm. So this poem by Melissa Balmain really caught my attention. Balmain lives in New York State, and her most recent book is *Walking in on People*, from Able Muse Press.

### Love Poem

The afternoon we left our first apartment,  
we scrubbed it down from ceiling to parquet.  
Who knew the place could smell like lemon muffins?  
It suddenly seemed nuts to move away.

The morning someone bought our station wagon,  
it gleamed with wax and every piston purred.  
That car looked like a centerfold in *Hot Rod!*  
Too late, we saw that selling was absurd.

And then there was the freshly tuned piano  
we passed along to neighbors with a wince.  
We told ourselves we'd find one even better;  
instead we've missed its timbre ever since.

So if, God help us, we are ever tempted  
to ditch our marriage when it's lost its glow,  
let's give the thing our finest spit and polish—  
and, having learned our lesson, not let go.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation ([www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org)), publisher of *Poetry* magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Poem copyright ©2014 by Melissa Balmain, "Love Poem," from *Walking in on People*, (Able Muse Press, 2014). Poem reprinted by permission of Melissa Balmain and Able Muse Press. Introduction copyright ©2015 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](mailto:alp@poetryfoundation.org)  
This column does not accept unsolicited poetry.