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- **Meet Conference on Poetry and Teaching Director and Faculty Dawn Potter**
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Meet Conference on Poetry and Teaching Director & Faculty Dawn Potter

Dawn Potter's books include three collections of poetry, a memoir, a writing guide, and an anthology of writings about poetry. Her poems and essays have appeared in the *Sewanee Review*, the *Threepenny*



Review, Prairie Schooner, and many other journals in the United States and abroad. A judge's nominee for the 2014 *Los Angeles Times* Book Award in Poetry, she has received grants and fellowships from the Elizabeth George Foundation, the Writer's Center, and the Maine Arts Commission. She lives in Harmony, Maine.

Dawn Potter on Poetry and Teaching

In her 1958 novel *The Bell*, Iris Murdoch wrote:

"Work, as it now is, . . . can rarely offer satisfaction to the half-contemplative. A few professions, such as teaching and nursing, remain such that they can be readily invested with a spiritual significance. But although it is possible, and indeed demanded of us, that all and any occupation be given a sacramental meaning, this is now, for the majority of people, almost intolerably difficult."

Murdoch published those words more than a half-century ago; today's situation feels even more dire. While I can't speak for nursing, the teaching profession is, for most people, no longer a haven of "spiritual significance." The human spirit, the divine spirit, the spirit of intellect and art, however one wants to latch onto that metaphor: none of those concepts has much to do with the daily interactions of teachers, students, colleagues, administrators, parents, let alone any pursuit of knowledge and self-discovery.

But every summer at The Frost Place Conference on Poetry and Teaching, I watch the spirit arise from the ashes. Though I direct the conference, this rebirth doesn't have much to do with me personally. I am not the participants' instructor. In many ways, I am more like the housekeeper or perhaps the gardener, and I use those words in their richest, least pejorative sense. It's my metaphorical job to make sure the windows are washed and the plants are watered, to hang the sheets outside on a sunny windy clothesline, to turn over soil dense with compost and earthworms. Then I step aside and watch what happens.

What happens is that people are happy, in a way they rarely have access to in

their daily lives. They wear their hearts on their sleeves: which is to say they talk to one another with vulnerability and delight. They ask questions of poetry, of themselves, of each other; they become excited, enchanted, deliriously overwhelmed by thought. The conference is a five-day utopia, in its own way. And the participants are, and have been, and will always be among the great blessings of my life.

Statement of My Creative Interests by Dawn Potter

Death, by which I mean the sudden death
of snuff bottles and weeping willow trees,
undiagnosed roads littered with sorrows,
and postal clerks languishing along the canals.

And Sex, of course. That goes without saying.
The insatiable queen; the pale and ruminating
heifer; the snails, incompatible on a blue plate.
(You see how the links begin to accrue.)

To a certain degree Love,
but with a teaspoon of Despair—
star-crossed bats, an aging incognito ragdoll,
three Polacks stumbling into a bar.

Not Hate so much as Grudging Defeat,
as when day breaks on time
or the sparrow scorns her basin of chickweed
while the furnace belches rank and artless air.

Although Wonder, without a doubt.
Those curious prosthetics, those animalia
with their clever hums and coos,
those quivering visions of Albion.

And Yearning, always Yearning:
the one-eyed child leaning out of the highchair,
the lord protector pacing his damp yew walk

as the Calydonian hunter straggles after the boar.



Spend your summer at The Frost Place
studying and writing poetry.

Come and be inspired.

- **The Frost Place Conference on Poetry and Teaching - June 21 - 25, 2015**
- **The Frost Place Conference on Poetry - July 12 - 18, 2015**
- **The Frost Place Poetry Seminar - August 2 - 8, 2015**



Frost Is In The Air: Robert Frost's Words, Your Voice

We want you to record your favorite Robert Frost poem and become a part of the Frost Is In The Air digital poem collection project.

Frost Is In The Air is a project aimed at collecting diverse voices reading the poetry of Robert Frost. The digital component, featured on the TFP YouTube channel, makes these poems available to a broad audience. We want you to be a part of this archive.

To participate, choose your favorite Frost poem, or one that speaks to you, and record it, the MP3 format is preferred but others are accepted (query for a complete list.) Once you have it recorded, send the recording to frost@frostplace.org with a line giving permission to post it online.

Include in your recording the following: This is "Poem Name" by Robert Frost recorded for The Frost Place by "Your Name."

We will then add the text and create a video of your reading and post it on our YouTube channel and feature the reading in our newsletter.

We would like a short biographical statement and a photo to post with the poem.

For an example, and to see what we've recorded in the past, access our Frost Is

In the Air poems on our [YouTube Channel](#).

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Mailing address:

The Frost Place
PO Box 74
Franconia, NH 03580

Phone: 603-823-5510

Email: frost@frostplace.org

Web: www.frostplace.org

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