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## **Conference on Poetry Faculty Gabriel Fried**

**Gabriel Fried** is the longtime poetry editor at Persea Books. He is the author of *Making the New Lamb Take*, a poetry collection, which was named a Best Book of 2007 by *Foreword Reviews* and the *St. Louis Post-*



*Dispatch*, and the editor of *Heart of the Order: Baseball Poems*. His poems have appeared widely in magazines and journals, among them *American Poetry Review*, *The American Scholar*, *Kenyon Review*, *Paris Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Yale Review*. Fried is on the faculty of the graduate creative writing programs of the University of Missouri and Sierra Nevada College, and a regular guest editor the Bread Loaf Summer Writers Conference and the Colrain Poetry Manuscript Conference.

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### **Gabriel Fried on the Poetry Workshop**

"I have two central goals for any creative writing workshop. The first is to emphasize that our role as reader-editors in the workshop is just as important as our role as poets. This is not merely because I want to emphasize a culture of collegiality and collaboration, though that's a lovely benefit. Instead it is because of my certainty that we learn about our own poetics through the scrutiny of others' work and the articulation of what we find there.

My second goal is to identify and explore the most essential ambitions of the poems submitted for our consideration—not the declared ambitions of the poets, but those that the poems seem to declare themselves. In articulating the ambitions of a poem (or a group of poems), we can begin to identify the payoffs and pitfalls of those ambitions, and assess the poem not simply as a compilation of poetic ornaments and gestures, but holistically, as a complete occasion with its own indispensable idiom and neurology."

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**Ends Well**

**by Gabriel Fried**

This is not the poem where the child comes back drowned.  
He isn't pulled out of the pond, full of silted water  
as a utility sink, lips like fish, eyes unblinking.  
Nor is it the poem where the child comes back maimed.  
He isn't ruined by claws or teeth, by gears or fall  
the way some children are we read about.

He wandered off while we were in a dream  
or an argument. And, like something from a dream  
or a retold family story, the dogs went with him,  
one on either side, as if they suddenly knew  
to do something other than steal socks or meatloaf.  
So this is a happy poem, full of relief and only a little shame.

Maybe he only went to see the cows or followed  
a dragonfly, or was enthralled by the mystery  
of the barn, sitting like a ribcage in the field.  
He's been walking now for longer than he hasn't.  
He walked young: nine months, ten. It's always  
seemed there's somewhere he is meant to be.

We've caught up to him at the greenhouse  
and across the stream, past the silo and beyond  
the air strip. He always comes back  
willing, happy, even grateful; how can we scold him?  
No wolf has seized him; he seems unchanged.  
Nothing he's discovered has yet to matter.

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**An Interview with George Singer, Poetry Seminar  
Participant, by Patrick Donnelly**

**Patrick Donnelly, director of The Frost Place Poetry Seminar,  
interviews former Seminar attendee George H.S. Singer, whose  
book *Ergon* is forthcoming from WordTech Ltd. in 2016.**

**Patrick Donnelly:** George, we at The Frost Place were thrilled when you told us that your first book of poems had been accepted for publication. Tell us about your relationship to The Frost Place over the years.

**George HS Singer:** The Frost Place as an institution and the people who have enlivened it have been central to my endeavors to write poetry and so I am delighted to be interviewed by you. I most want to say how grateful I am that dedicated people invigorate and continue to renew The Frost Place, keeping the creative vitality of the place over decades. I first went to a weeklong Festival at The Frost Place when I was 40 years old and was beginning to write again after a hiatus of twenty years. I was taken by the place and its people. I think the evening readings in Robert Frost's barn with its wall of photos of Frost Place Fellows, the informality of folding chairs in front of what resembles a Buddhist founder's shrine, the resident mouse who appears infallibly as the faculty poets and the famous guests read, and the generosity of the directors and faculty make an honored space where there is room for the heart to speak and be heard. [...]

My guess is that most of the hundreds of aspiring poets who have been touched by the place have viewed the chance to read their own work there on the last night of the weeklong retreats as a memorable and inspiring gift. Not a few of us are fueled to keep writing in the secret hope maybe we will become good enough to be asked to give a full reading in that old barn. I am touched by your invitation to answer your questions in light of how much The Frost Place has meant to me.

**PD:** Can you tell us about the poems in the book, how long you've been working on them, and what kind of revision and submission processes brought you to this goal?

**GHSS:** I started writing the poems in the book in the 1980s when I first hoped I could speak about my inner spiritual life in poems that someone else might find meaningful. People who try to keep a prayer in their heart or loving kindness in their minds tend to be quiet and rarely let on about what this effort entails and how the world looks while so engaged. These often-difficult matters are so easily glossed over or bastardized in the New Age nostrums that are prominent in our culture. I also hoped I might communicate with others as a way to dispel a certain loneliness that comes with the territory. I discovered in the process that writing can be part of a spiritual life. To go deep into the mind where the good poems seem to swim takes attention, regular effort, and a willingness to get the mind's smoke screens out of the way. It also requires

banishing self-doubt and self-hate so a genuine voice as can take the floor. And the poems become an opportunity to see ways that more growth is needed. Sometimes this comes as a rude awakening as when a fine editor (who happens to be interviewing me now) pointed out that several of the poems seemed to be designed to call attention to my admirable qualities and unique experiences, and further some of them risked sounding preachy or superficially pretty to boot. Thank heavens for honest feedback. The self of course has to motivate the writing but the poem itself must be able to stand alone aside from self. It took me a good six months of reevaluating my writing and the way I projected self into it before I did a thorough rewrite of the manuscript. The work of getting beyond this kind of vanity to the deeper currents will likely go on as long as I write.

[...] Most all of my poems have gone through anywhere from two to ten revisions always with feedback from Molly Peacock and/or Patrick Donnelly, or they have been workshopped with poets from The Frost Place.

I have had about 25 poems published in poetry journals. I dislike rejection notes and the clerical work of sending them out and keeping track of which journal accepts and rejects which poem, but I am sure this is true of most poets. So I do it intermittently, usually looking for journals that aim high.

Once I had accumulated a manuscript of about 50 pages I asked Molly Peacock to help edit it. Later I asked Patrick to also review it to get another point of view. Every poem in the manuscript has been rewritten, usually several times, and the manuscript as a whole has undergone several revisions. The book is called *Ergon*, and will be published by WordTech Press in June of 2016. I'm starting now on what I hope will become my second book.

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**George Singer, Poetry Seminar participant, publishes first book, *Ergon*.**

[Read the full interview here.](#)

[Read a poem from the new book.](#)

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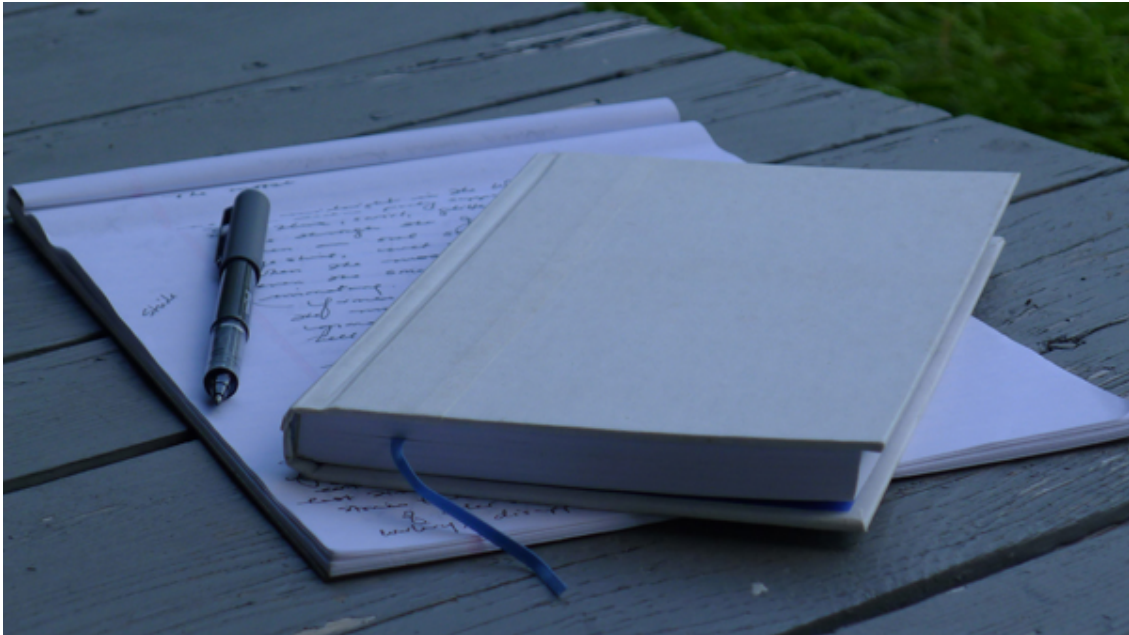
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