

Conference on Poetry and Teaching
Director and Faculty, Dawn Potter

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Conference on Poetry and Teaching Edition, #1

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Meet Dawn Potter, Director and Faculty

Dawn Potter is the author or editor of seven books of prose and poetry, most recently *The Vagabond's*



Bookshelf: A Reader's Memoir, forthcoming in spring 2016. New poems and essays have appeared in the *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Sewanee Review*, *Salamander*, and many other journals in the United States and abroad.

Check out Dawn's blog [read more...](#)

An interview with Dawn at CavanKerry Press [read more...](#)

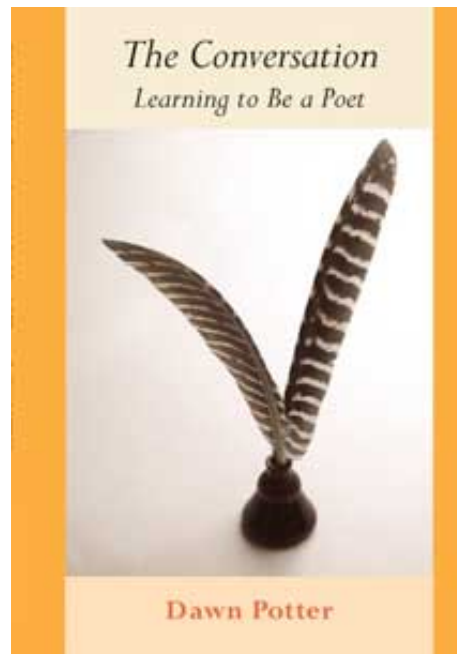
An interview with Dawn at Sewanee Review [read more...](#)

A teaching essay from Dawn on poets.org [read more...](#)

Dawn works widely as a visiting writer, leading classes for K-12 students, teacher development programs, and undergraduate and graduate students. Upcoming sessions in 2016 include workshops at Pine Manor College's Solstice MFA program, Smith College, the University of Maine at Augusta, and the White Mountain School.

In addition to writing, editing, and teaching, Dawn sings and plays fiddle with the band Doughty Hill. For more about Dawn and her work, visit her blog.

APPLY



Dawn on Poetry and Teaching

In my book *The Conversation: Learning to Be a Poet*, I write:

"To be a writer, one must be a questing reader, forever seeking closer intimacy with the art; and talking about the details of that art, whether in actual conversation or merely to oneself, can lead a reader down unexpected imaginative paths. The three actions are entwined; one leads to the other, leads to the other, leads to the other.

Even if you think of yourself as more reader than poet, more teacher than reader, participating in all elements of the reading-conversation-writing cycle will help you become a more concentrated and flexible apprentice to the art."

As a teacher, I believe it is my responsibility to help students become flexible, curious, committed readers even as they strive to become better writers. The classroom is an opportunity for creative growth and also civil engagement with ideas and emotions outside our own experience. I work to foster intellectual curiosity and emotional honesty, an engagement with both the world and the necessary solitude of the artist.

"The classroom is an opportunity for creative growth and also civil engagement with ideas and emotions outside our own experience."



R.F. in his Morris Chair.
"There is danger of forgetting that poetry must include the mind, as well as the emotions . . . The mind is dangerous and must be left in . . . The poet can use the mind in fear and trembling. But he must use it." (An interview in *The Scotsman*, Edinburgh, May 1957, speaking about young poets.)

What Has Dawn Been Reading Lately?

**"...writers can
learn so much from
reading outside
their genre"**

I've been rereading Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* and thinking about the vigors of his prose—the driving meter of his sentences, their rhetorical balances—both of which have significantly influenced my own poetry.

I love the fact that writers can learn so much from reading outside their genre: I know several contemporary novelists who read far more poetry than prose, and Dickens himself was heavily influenced by Shakespeare and other dramatists.

Gołąbki by Dawn Potter

Gołąbki

1979

which the aunts pronounced gowumkee you know cabbage rolls honey
and packed into a crockpot pasted all over with pictures
of happy brown daisies and then balanced them on the plush backseat

of a cream-colored Delta 88 bought used off the lot from a dealer
that Uncle Boy played accordion with in the beer garden up to Dunbar
and drove them down nice and hot to the farmhouse for Sunday dinner

even though our mother had already slapped together a bean casserole
and our father had picked a thousand ears of corn from the garden
and we were as stuffed as rats but the aunts ignored all signs of a previous meal

and said oh go ahead you're tall you can hide it so we went ahead and swallowed
three or four tomato-sopped beef-stuffed toothpick-riddled cabbage socks
because we knew that good table manners means eating every single thing

old ladies cook for you no exceptions and then saying thank you afterward
and offering to scrub the crockpot and at least eating gołąbki was like eating
heaven that is if heaven was located in a coal-grimed empty five-and-dime

between what the aunts called that laundry mat and a Mennonite bookstore
which amazingly stocked all of Laura Ingalls Wilder's novels so as the dryers
growled and trembled and we seemed to be slumped in plastic bucket chairs

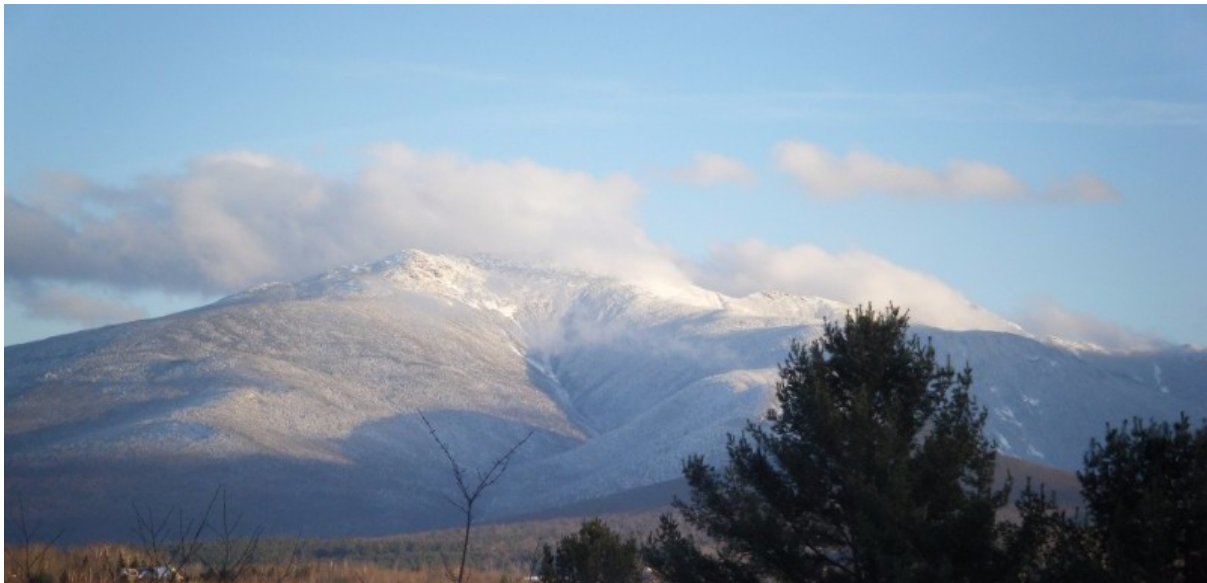
guarding the towels and undershirts really we were running and skipping
among the fresh prairie grasses in bare feet sun bonnets hanging down our backs
Jack the brindle bulldog frisking over the sod house as Pa's fiddle sang the tale

of the wild plains as the dryer whipped the sopped blankets our tight-lipped mother
had unpinched from the line poked savagely through the ringer in the basement
hailed into town in the trunk of the pie-eyed Plymouth our father had once upon a time

bought brand-new making damn sure Uncle Boy had nothing to do with it
four doors a miracle of convenience and even an AM radio pulsing disco
under the foglit sky under the wet shriek of the mill whistle and O those gołabki

we ate them and they were a heaven just as sloppy and leaking as ours

More Information About Summer Programs



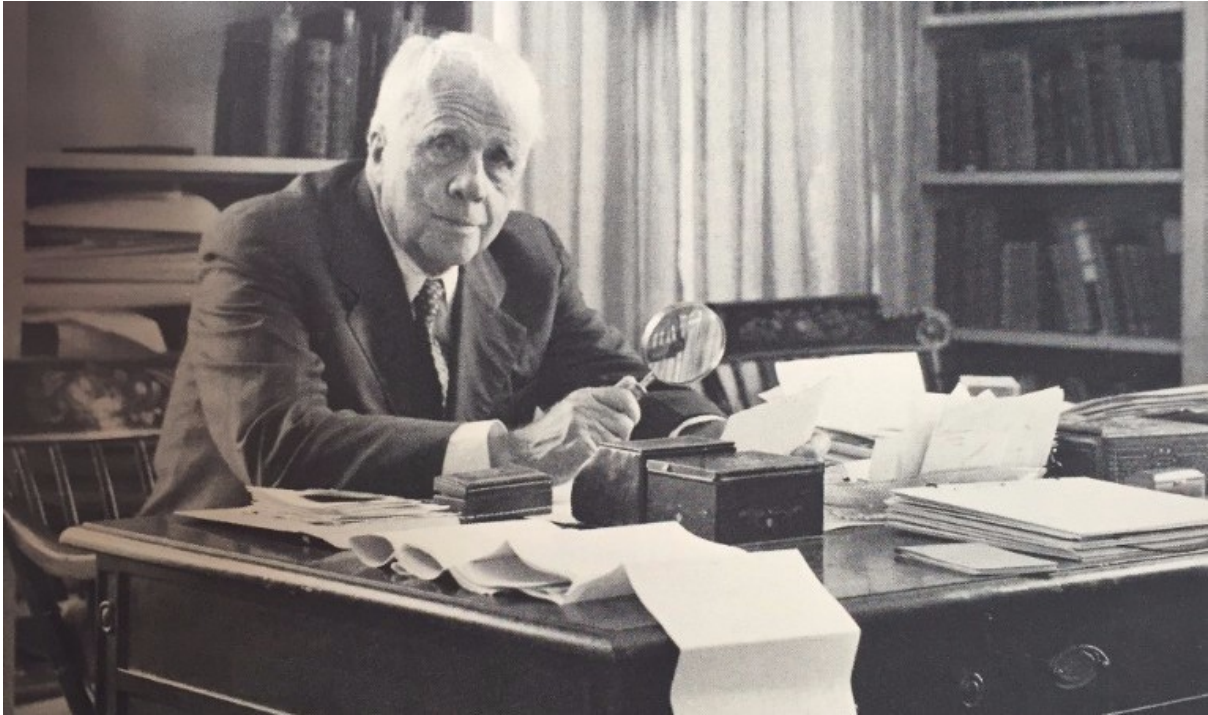
Conference on Poetry and Teaching | June 25 - 29, 2016

Director: [Dawn Potter](#) **Associate Director:** [Teresa Carson](#)

Faculty: [Kerrin McCadden](#), [Rich Villar](#)

Held each year in June, the Conference on Poetry and Teaching is a unique opportunity for teachers to work closely with both their peers and a team of illustrious poets who have particular expertise in working with teachers at all levels.

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Writing Intensive | June 29 - 30, 2016

Director: [Afaa Michael Weaver](#)

The Frost Place Writing Intensive is a day-and-a-half reading and writing workshop that directly follows the Conference on Poetry and Teaching. Led by renowned poet-teacher Afaa Micheal Weaver, it gives teachers the opportunity to focus entirely on their own creative growth.

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Conference on Poetry | July 10 - 16, 2016

Director: [Martha Rhodes](#)

Faculty: [Gabrielle Calvocoressi](#), [Maudelle Driskell](#), [Rachel Eliza Griffiths](#),
[Michael Klein](#), [Matthew Olzmann](#)

Poetry Fellow: [Collier Noguez](#)

Spend a week at “intensive poetry camp” with writers who are deeply committed to learning more about the craft of writing poetry.

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Poetry Seminar | July 31 - August 5, 2016

Director: [Patrick Donnelly](#)

Faculty: [Ilya Kaminsky](#), [Cleopatra Mathis](#), [Lyrae Van-Clief Stefanon](#)

You're invited to join a select community of poets for 5-1/2 days this August to refresh your artistic inspiration in a setting of great natural beauty.

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