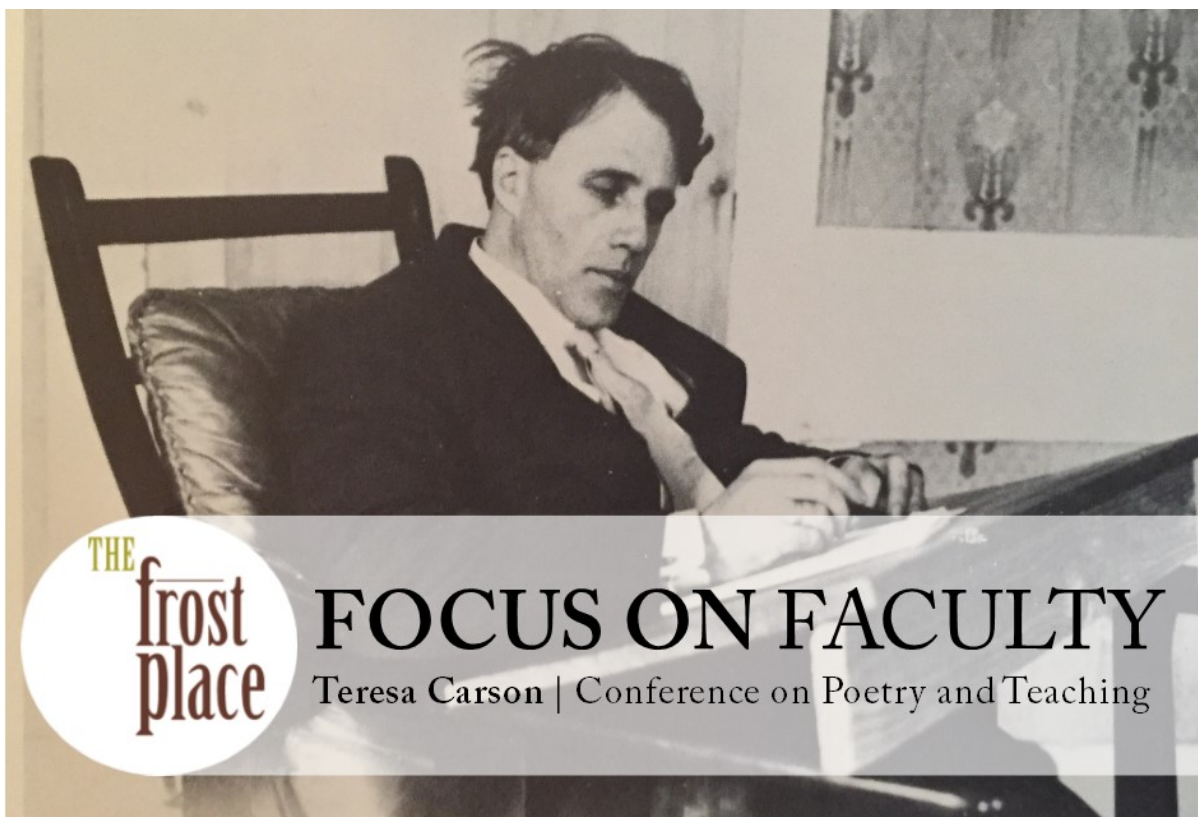


Conference on Poetry and Teaching
Associate Director and Faculty, Teresa Carson

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Meet Teresa Carson, Associate Director and Faculty

Teresa Carson is the associate publisher at CavanKerry Press and the assistant director of The Frost Place Conference on Poetry and Teaching. She holds an MFA in Poetry and an MFA in Theatre, both from Sarah Lawrence College. She has published three collections of



poems: *Elegy for the Floater* (CavanKerry Press, 2008); *My Crooked House*, which was a finalist in the Paterson Poetry Prize, in 2014; and *The Congress of Human Oddities* (Deerbrook Editions, 2015). Teresa has lived in Hudson County, NJ, for her entire life—nowadays with her husband John in their crooked house in Union City.

Check out [Teresa's website...](#)

APPLY



Teresa Carson on Poetry and Teaching

I like to have a balance of reading poems and writing poems in every workshop. I'll bring a poem for us to explore in various ways—e.g. through dictation and discussion; through theater-based exercises—because I want the participants, no matter their “comfort level” with poetry, to participate in the larger conversation of poetry, not just in a conversation about their poems. Only after we've spent a good amount of time exploring this poem, will I give a writing prompt based on some aspect of it.



What's on Teresa's Bookshelf?

I love Dawn Potter's two books—*The Poet's Sourcebook* and *The Conversation*—because both contain such honest, perceptive, and thoughtful observations from “good” readers. We can learn a great deal about how to write poems from those who know how to read poems.

"We can learn a great deal about how to write poems from those who know how to read poems."

I recently discovered a jewel: *First We Read, Then We Write* by Robert D.

Richardson. It's a book of reading/writing "advice" culled from the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who I greatly admire.

I've been close reading Dickinson (particularly manuscript versions of her poems), Keats, and Shakespeare of late. The more times I return to their works, the longer it takes me to read even one poem/speech because I wander into new levels and layers on every reading of every word, every space, in them.

"I realized those glimpses of the infinite frighten me."

But, right now, *Moby-Dick*, which I consider to be an epic poem, is the book most important to me as a writer.

In fact, I've been somewhat obsessively reading and re-reading it for the past year. I'm in awe of the complex structure of metaphorical, philosophical and narrative layers in this book. Almost every word in it is loaded with multiple levels of meaning. While I'm now quite familiar with the text, I still have much to discover about/in those layers. For example, on my last reading I paid special attention to the "trapdoor" moments in the book, which open into the infinite, because I realized those glimpses of the infinite frighten me. How did Melville create those "trapdoors"? Why do those moments frighten me? What other writers create similar trapdoors in their works?



"Poetry begins in trivial metaphors, pretty metaphors, "grace" metaphors, and goes on to the profoundest thinking that we have. Poetry provides the one permissible way

of saying one thing and meaning another. People say, "Why don't you say what you mean?" We never do that, do we, being all of us too much poets. We like to talk in parables and in hints and in indirections — whether from diffidence or some other instinct."

-Robert Frost, "Education by Poetry", speech delivered at Amherst College and subsequently revised for publication in the Amherst Graduates' Quarterly (February 1931).

Teresa Carson on the Writing Process

I tend to work on projects; therefore individual poems are connected to a larger subject/theme— e.g. a sideshow traveling through the Midwest at the height of the Civil War.

"In essence, my writing process resembles a popcorn popper..."

There is usually a long gestation/research period, which always feels way too long, before I start writing the poems but once things get going I work on multiple poems at once. In essence, my writing process resembles a popcorn popper: first nothing seems to happen then there's a pop here, a pop there then there's explosive popping for a few minutes then back to a pop here, a pop there then back to nothing.



"June 29, 1863" by Teresa Carson

Across the state of Ohio,
across the counties of Ashtabula, Pickaway, Drake, Cuyahoga, and Stark,
across the towns of Pigeon Run, Winesburg, Rome, and Paradise,
women wash clothes on Mondays.
The women of Ohio believe *the Creator of all things is a Being of system and order*
and therefore believe each hour must
be systematically employed;
they must *cultivate regulated habits* in regard to household chores.
The women believe these habits *will bring forth fruits of good or ill,*
not only through earthly generations but through everlasting ages.
Thus, on Mondays, the women of Ohio wash clothes—
a task that leaves no time to cook *benevolent provisions* so on Sundays they bake
hams, which can be eaten cold next day.
Their men have gotten used to this.
Washday begins at dawn when women tote buckets from rivers and wells.
Then hours and hours of scrub/rinse/wring/dip/hang.
As evening falls, their lye-cracked hands sprinkle and roll the clothes
for ironing on Tuesday.
Their mothers trained them how to wash and how to hang a proper line—
whites in sun, colors turned wrong side out, sheets hiding petticoats—

and they, *who do not eat the bread of idleness*,
will train their daughters in these same domestic rules
because the women of Ohio know
evil results from disorder.

More Information About Summer Programs



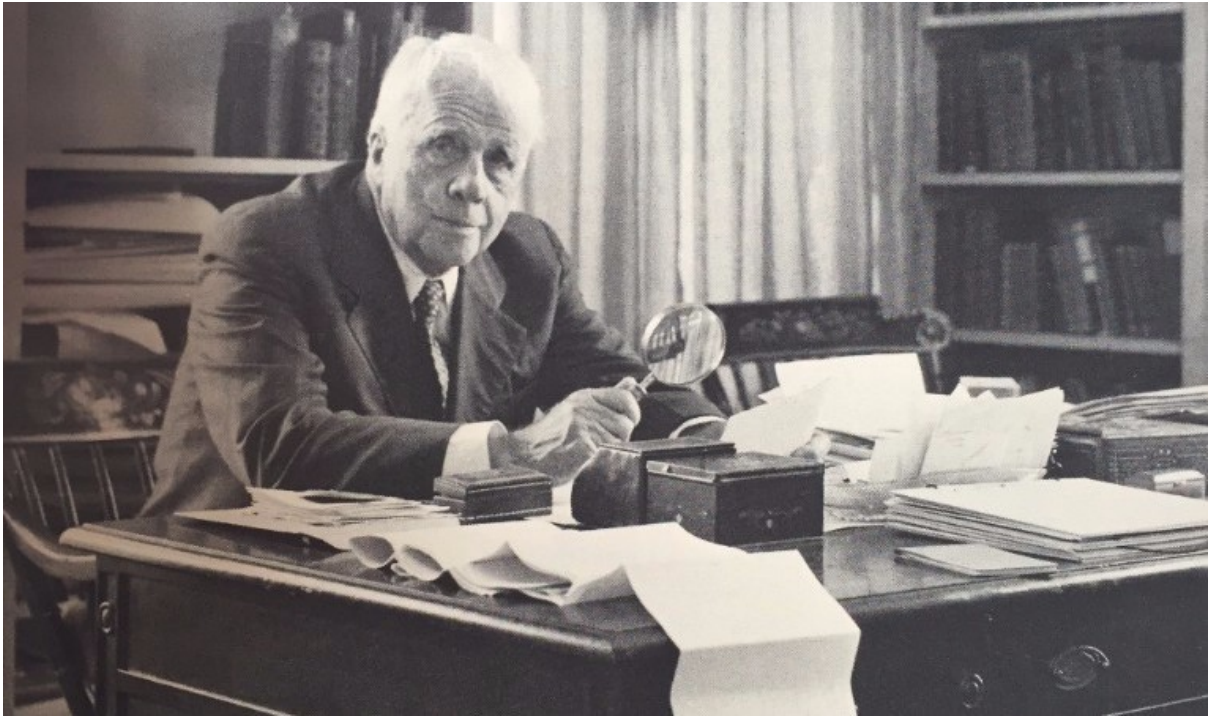
Conference on Poetry and Teaching | June 25 - 29, 2016

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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