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## In this Issue

Rich Villar: poet, essayist, editor, curator, educator, and faculty at The Frost Place Conference on Poetry and Teaching this summer.

In "On Poetry", read Rich's advice for how to integrate your status as "poet" into day-to-day life. In "Craft Books" you'll find books about line breaks and on Rich Villar's "Bookshelf" you'll learn about workshop as an agent of social change and W.H. Auden's issues with teaching poetry at all. In "On Writing", read about Rich's philosophy of writing poetry. Check out the poem "Ars Poetica #8" by Rich Villar.

Plus: Scholarships, Robert Frost on Practicality, and Writing Prompts!

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## Meet Rich Villar, Faculty Member



**Rich Villar** is a poet, essayist, editor, curator, and educator originally from Paterson, New Jersey. His first collection of poems, *Comprehending Forever* (Willow Books), was a finalist for the 2015 International Latino Book Award. A multiple-year Pushcart Prize nominee for both poetry and prose, he is an alumnus of the VONA/Voices Workshop and the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. Rich has led workshops and independent studies with wide varieties of students, and he currently serves as writing faculty for La Sopa, a community-based program in New York City for writing and performance.

***Find Rich Villar online:***



**HOW TO APPLY**

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# Comprehending Forever



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**Accepting Applications | Latin@ Scholarship and  
Pardlo Scholarship**

For the first time ever, we are offering two full scholarships to summer

programs for poets at The Frost Place. **There is no fee to apply.** [Submissions are being accepted RIGHT NOW!](#)

### **2016 Latin@ Scholarship**

This scholarship is designed to encourage the Latin@ voice in poetry and the literary arts, both at The Frost Place and in the broader literary community. The winner will receive a full fellowship to attend the Conference on Poetry at The Frost Place, July 10 - 16, 2016, including room and board (valued at approximately \$1,550).

[READ MORE](#)

### **2016 Gregory Pardlo Scholarship**

This scholarship is open to African American poets writing in English who have published up to one book of poetry. The winner will receive a full scholarship to attend the Poetry Seminar at The Frost Place, July 31 – August 5, 2016, including room and board (valued at approximately \$1,550), and will give a featured reading at the Seminar.

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## **On Poetry | "Poet" is a State of Being**

***"In every workshop I teach, I remind my writers that the title Poet (the maker, the creator) can, and indeed must be, a master status. In spaces with working adults, this comes as a revelation..."***

In sociology, one's master status is his or her overarching identification, the one or two modes of being that one inescapably assumes every single day. Mother is a master status. Son. Father. Student. Teacher. In every workshop I teach, I remind my writers that the title Poet (the maker, the creator) can, and indeed must be, a master status. In spaces with working adults, this comes as a revelation: we have willingly assumed those other titles while relegating artistic expression to a hobby, to be done when we have time, or as a diversion.

I remind them that Wallace Stevens regularly walked to work in metered footsteps, composing lines. I'll tell them about driving the same roads to work as Dr. William Carlos Williams. I'll let them know about poets who are also



construction workers, lawyers, doctors, religious leaders. And I'll tell them about Pedro Pietri, the poet laureate of the Young Lords, whose very life and activism was poetry itself.

My work in the schools usually finds a home with educators and administrators seeking alternative pathways to literacy. In middle school and high school, this is true as it relates to language skills, but I also like to teach poetry as a means of citizenship formation. The poet is a truth-teller, and I teach poetry as investigation, whether that investigation is about one's self, one's identity, one's home, or one's society. For many of my younger students, especially, the poetry workshop is not just a place to learn poetic lexicon, write down their feelings, or free write to a prompt.

***"The poet is a truth-teller, and I teach poetry as investigation, whether that investigation is about one's self, one's identity, one's home, or one's society."***

These become spaces to challenge the pathologies they face in their everyday existence. I often describe my workshop as a training ground for cultural workers and keen observers of self, place, and society; the place where we learn that Poet is something we can be at all times, in all circumstances and stations.

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## Alumni News

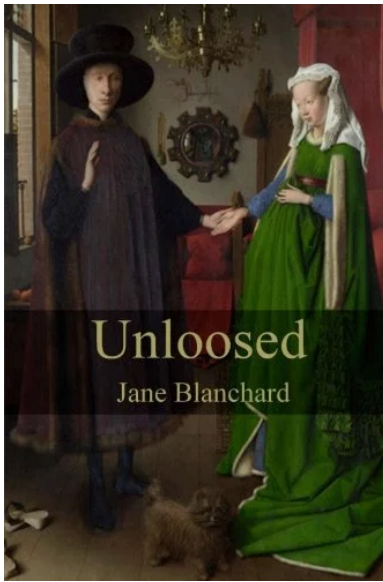
We want to celebrate you—our alumni—who have joined us in past summers to read, write, and grow at The Frost Place. [Submit your news](#) to us and we will spread the word on social media and the web!

### [Conference on Poetry and Teaching Alumna Jane Blanchard's Chapbook \*Unloosed\* Just Released](#)

Congratulations to Jane Blanchard, alumna of the 2010 Conference on Poetry and Teaching at The Frost Place on the release of her chapbook *Unloosed*.

"These poems are the incitements, ripostes, advisories, and evocations of someone who has come through. Jane Blanchard uses form to real effect, as a vehicle for wit and emotional precision. Her travails and triumphs have the feel of a life honestly rendered in succinct words."

—Baron Wormser



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## Craft Books | Rich Villar in Conversation with Craft

*The Art of the Poetic Line*, James Longenbach. I learned that in writing the poems for my first book, I had poured my entire state of mind into my line breaks. This book gave me the critical vocabulary to understand how.

***"If you're a teacher who has the audacity to believe that art is an agent of social change, then you have to read the book that was the blueprint to crafting workshops around that idea."***

*June Jordan's Poetry For The People*, Lauren Muller and the Blueprint Collective, editors. If you're a teacher who has the audacity to believe that art is an agent of social change, then you have to read the book that was the blueprint to crafting workshops around that idea.

Other seminal texts for me:

*The Poets' Companion*, edited by Kim Addonizio and Dorianne Laux; "The Education of a Storyteller," Toni Cade Bambara; the introduction to *Aloud: Voices From the Nuyorican Poets' Café*, Miguel Algarín and Bob Holman; "Authority and American Usage," David Foster Wallace; and one particular [Paris Review interview in which W.H. Auden cautions against teaching poetry at all](#). It feels oddly nice to have a genuine professional quarrel with Auden.



"It's knowing what to do with things that counts."

-From "At Woodward's Garden" by Robert Frost in *A Further Range* (Holt, 1936)

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## Bookshelf | Reading as Revolution

Of late: *The Great Sympathetic: Walt Whitman and the North American Review*, edited by J.D. Schraffenberger, which presents Whitman's voice and several voices following after him a hundred years later, in the tradition of the cultural worker, pondering the idea of a pluralistic national literature.

***"Those of us who seek to deepen and complicate the story of American life and language find a champion in Whitman"***

Those of us who seek to deepen and complicate the story of American life and language find a champion in Whitman—and in William Carlos Williams and Allen Ginsberg, two shadows in which I live as a poet from Paterson. The title poem of Martín Espada's new book *Vivas to Those Who Have Failed* is about the 1913 Paterson silk strike, and lately I've felt the need to revisit the spiritual realm represented by my hometown.

***"Without giving too much away, I think it's safe to say I'm in***

There are three poets to whom I return to constantly: Gregory Orr, Aracelis Girmay, and Jack Gilbert. Without giving too much away, I

***the midst of a  
personal  
revolution."***

think it's safe to say I'm in the midst of a personal revolution. Those three poets, who I have always loved and admired, possess a haunting/haunted quality to their voices and subject matter that I am only now coming to understand.

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## **Bananagrams Writing Prompt**

We have two responses to last week's writing prompt, pitched in this week by Daniel Levin, who attended the Conference on Poetry in 2014 and 2015, and Gary Corseri. [Last week's prompt](#).

### **ANYONE CAN BE A JUDGE**

Or have judgment foisted upon them.  
When you call me, anthrax appears—  
imaginary—on the bedside table. Every time  
I eye it, considering. See, if I imagine things  
they exist for me—theoretically powerful.  
If I read that bacteria graze upon pores  
like livestock in fields and then look at you,  
I see them. If only you washed more thoroughly.  
And when you speak, a middle school band  
practices minor scales in the flume of your throat.  
I see them—bell of a tuba tickling your uvula,  
timpani on your tonsils, triangle around  
your trachea. Theoretically—that is,  
in my mind's eye—this is a magic show and I  
am your assistant. You have put a twist  
on the classic “saw in half” routine.  
This one involves an ax. The target  
not my torso but my joy. Handle out  
to the audience (the audience—a few  
raving lunatics and newborn babes),  
you say, “Don’t be coy now! Any takers?”

### **BABE** **By Gary Corseri**

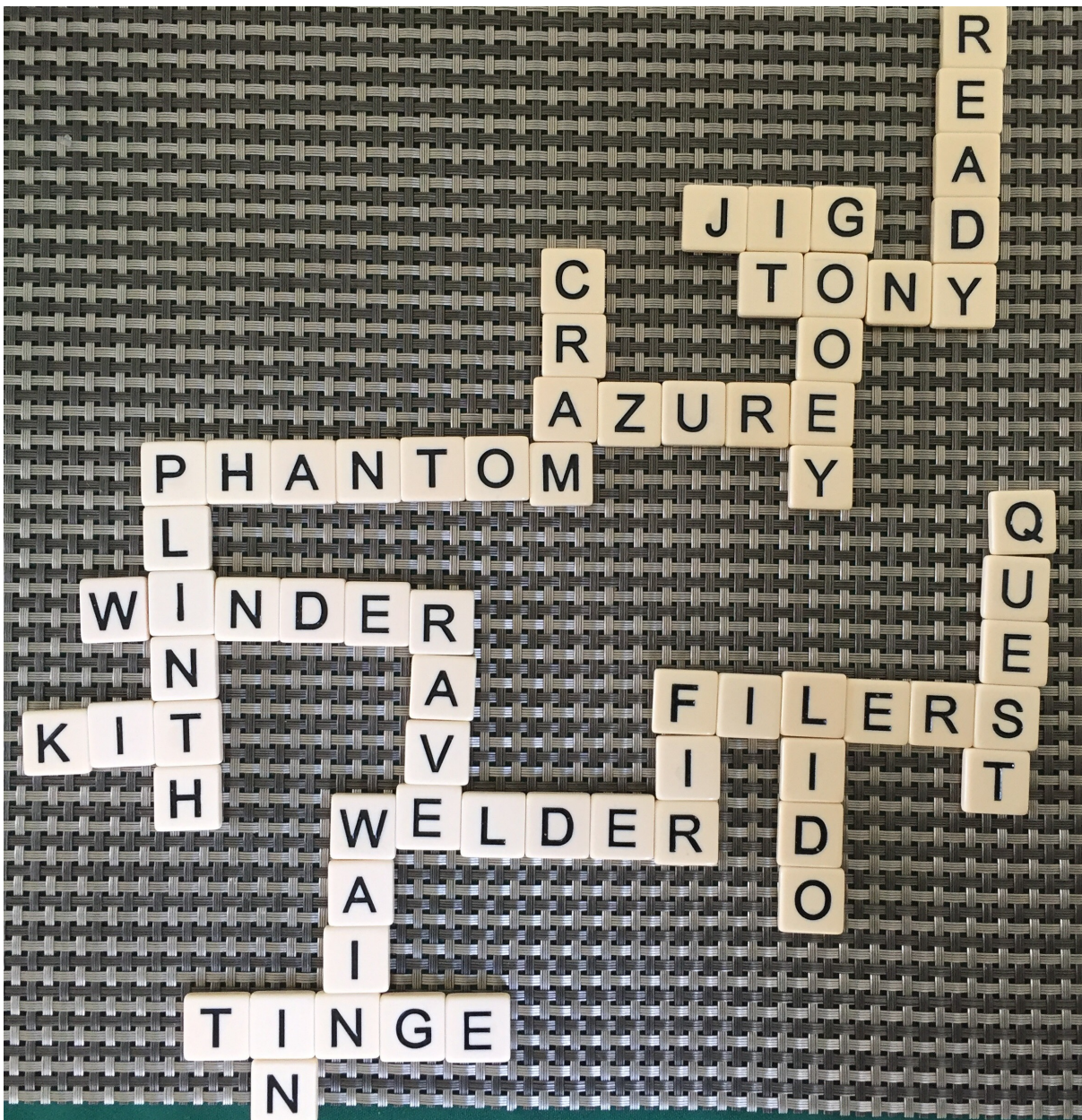
Babe, I joy-ride the flume of each coy  
pore you foist in my direction. O



magic-eyed taker of every bandwidth—  
judge not my raving soul,  
for I've grazed and doted  
on the honeydew of you,  
shunned the anthrax of this world  
for a few, sweet glimpses.

You're my jib, flying jib, foremast  
over the waves of this confusing sea  
where the axmen wait  
to shatter dreams—  
theoretically, metaphorically  
speaking.

[Send your response to this week's prompt to frost@frostplace.org](mailto:frost@frostplace.org) by Sunday  
May 1 and we'll share our favorites in the newsletter. Are you ready for this  
quest? Let's see how many azure-tinged gooey phantoms you can cram onto  
that plinth.



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## On Writing | All Habits are Writing Habits

***"There are plenty of writers with hard and fast writing practices. Do it first thing in the morning! Write at the witching hour! Write with wine and candles and incense! I'm just not that writer."***

I've gone many weeks without writing a line. I've also gone an entire year finding it difficult to do anything else except write. I am obsessive, perhaps addictive, in my habits and practices, so if I'm engrossed in reading a book or mastering a recipe or fighting my father's insurance company, it tends to be the only thing I do in that moment. If I've got a particular theme in my head, I'll stick to it stubbornly as I write my poems. I am the master of the Strongly



Worded Letter. I tend to write essays when I'm righteously angry. I'll formulate a theory on writing practice or expand on some theme, and that paper or essay will eat up my life for an entire day or week at a time. I do write to music. Miles Davis, mostly.

***"A poet tells the truth, digs for answers, and investigates every theory. This requires him or her to get out from behind the desk once in a while"***

If I have to make a philosophy for poets, it might be this: a poet is not a poet simply because they move a pen or click a keyboard. A poet tells the truth, digs for answers, and investigates every theory. This requires him or her to get out from behind the desk once in a while, breathe, look at the moon, experience life in motion (I tend to formulate most of my poems on some mode of transportation), hurt somebody's feelings, skin their own knees, and embrace vulnerability.

The best writing habit is knowing that *all your habits are writing habits*. To be a poet means to live in constant awareness and to be fully invested in the present moment. Do these things, and you'll find yourself with an unlimited store of emotional truth to turn a phrase with later. It seems ridiculously counterintuitive, but sometimes I have to put the pen down in order to write.



**Ars Poetica #8**  
**by Rich Villar**

A night like this will pass without sleep, and she  
is the first and last thought—

at a keyboard, a notebook, a soft soundtrack  
coaxing the players keeping time

in her stories. She will not tell  
her mind to play another's game.

She will give no coin to the organ grinder,  
color her world unfamiliar. She has things,

things, things, always, but they will wait  
their turn while she reads Erich Fromm.

She wakes precisely at 12:56. One perfect cup  
of Bustelo. The laugh only she knows,

the one she keeps to herself when she  
says yes, and the universe bends to you.

She is the bridge between climax and denouement,  
sleeping between the pages of books, surrounded

by handwritten notes, and no one is answering  
the door until she gives place to what is

intertwining itself in her fingers, that is,  
she is the architect of stars this night

and every night, adoration is adoration when she  
says it is, and she has always been Amor.

This is how you love her. This is how you will lose  
your sleep, why you will never be the well

into which she drops her voice.

-from *Comprehending Forever* (Willow Books, 2015)

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## More Information About Summer Programs



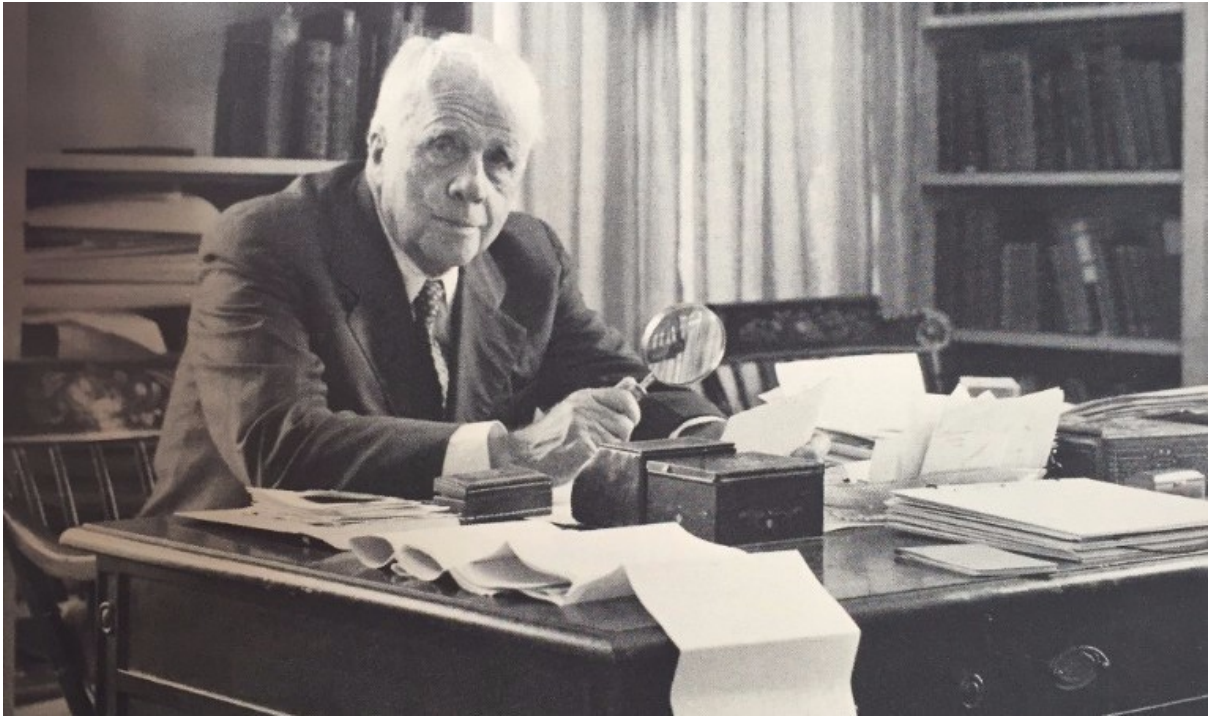
**Conference on Poetry and Teaching** | June 25 - 29, 2016

**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.

[READ MORE](#)



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 and Fellows:** [Gabrielle Calvocoressi](#), [Maudelle Driskell](#), [Rachel Eliza Griffiths](#), [Michael Klein](#), [Matthew Olzmann](#), [Collier Nogue](#)

Immerse yourself in poetry. Spend a week at “intensive poetry camp” with writers who are deeply committed to learning more about the craft of writing poetry. For thirty-plus years, the Conference on Poetry has been a daily immersion in listening, reflection, and conversation about the writing and reading of poetry.

Each day, there is a faculty-led discussion class or talk on an aspect of craft; three hour small-group workshops; a period of silence for reading poetry and time to generate and revise poems. Each night, we gather at the Henry Holt Barn at The Frost Place (Frost’s actual barn) for readings by faculty and guests. Share your work in a special reading at the Henry Holt Barn at The Frost Place. Spend a portion of July writing, revising, reading, learning, and having a wonderful time with other writers.

[READ MORE](#)



**Poetry Seminar** | July 31 - August 5, 2016

**Director:** [Patrick Donnelly](#)

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

Spend five days in August with a select community of poets exploring your artistic work in the context of a rich variety of poetry ancestors and contemporaries. Learn from a distinguished and accomplished faculty how poets choose, imitate, enter into dialogue with, and sometimes argue with the work of our poetic ancestors and contemporaries. Seminar participants will have their poems in progress given generous and focused attention, and on the final night will read their work at the Henry Holt Barn at The Frost Place. This is a unique opportunity for dedicated poets to delve intensely into the poetic process.

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