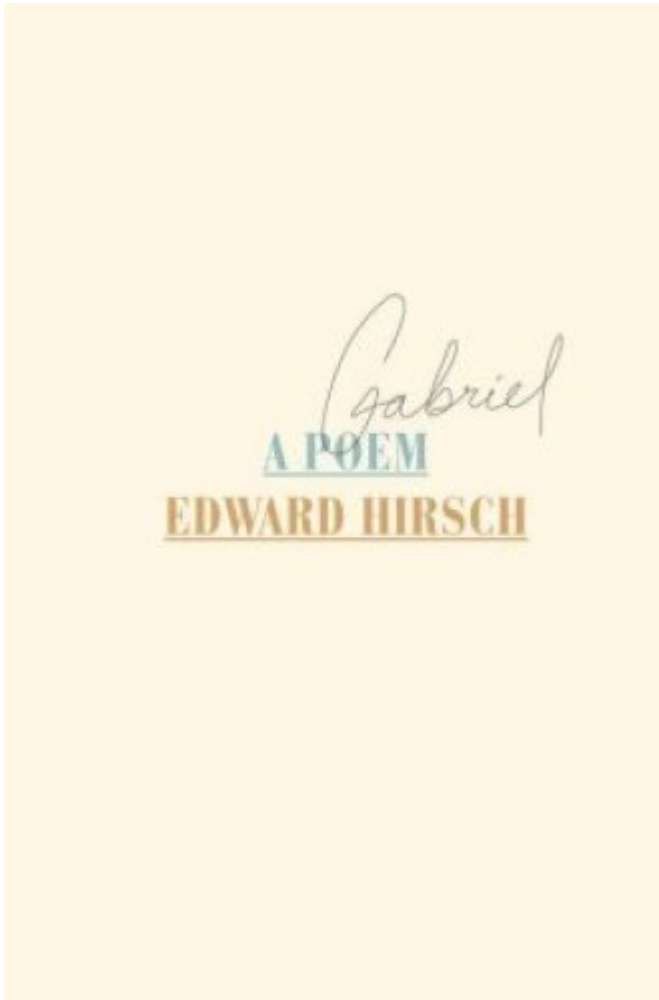


Gabriel: A Poem, by Edward Hirsch

Books in the [November 26, 2014](#) issue

In Review



Gabriel: A Poem

By Edward Hirsch

Knopf

Hirsch writes a book-length lament in verse for his son, who died at age 22 from a drug overdose. Gabriel was diagnosed with one mental disorder after another. One doctor told Hirsch, “Think of the brain as a switchboard. . . . / He has a lot of things

knocked out.” Of the loss of his son, Hirsch writes: “What else are there but rituals / To cover up the emptiness.” He admits that “When my son’s suffering ended / My own began.” Hirsch is angry at God, a God he’s not even sure exists: “I will not forgive you / Indifferent God / Until you give me back my son.” Hirsch artfully weaves into his stanzas the experiences of other poets and artists who lost a child, as if to become part of a support group for grieving parents.