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Poetry

Joseph S. Salemi

Granny in Tights

The fastest growing section of the Internet pornography world are sites that feature old ladies and grandmothers.

—News item

The stage names given to the ladies cast
Are chosen for their frilly, antique tone—
Names quaint and powdered, reeking of the past,
Like body talc and *Champ-des-Fleurs* cologne:

Lavinia or Ernestine or Zoë,
Arletta, Marguerite, or Bernadette—
Prudence, Sophie, Martha, or Aunt Chloë,
Hermione or Constance or Claudette.

Some wear girdles, half-slips, corsets, stays,
Seamed stockings, lingerie with Belgian lace—
Their hairstyles hearken back to bygone days
Of teacups, sachet bags, and saying grace.

Some are grossly overweight or plump
And others wraith-like, wizened, barely there—
All have droopy breasts and sagging rumps
With flesh as rotten as a long-ripe pear.

They do what every whore does who is paid,
But always with young men who might be sons.
They seem inured to their salacious trade,
As much as teenage chippies with firm buns.

And yet one wonders: Can it be mere cash
That drives a woman, threescore years and ten,
To let a camera crew explore her gash,
And photograph her orgy with three men?

Or is it more, perhaps? A final urge
To get back to some primal, vital source—
To seek out in a young man's swollen verge
The deathless thing that Shaw called The Life Force?

In any case, it hardly matters now—
Our time is one where female honor's dead,
When Grandma is a fornicating sow
And golden years are transformed into lead.

Damaged Goods

You've heard about the "Warehouse Principle?"
Just wait. One minute everything you own
is locked up safely. Enter, act of God
(details will vary: please fill in the blank).

You know it's bad, it makes you sick to think,
so maybe for a while you run away,
but that seems cowardly. And such a waste,
because there's plenty left if you can stand
to pick apart the sodden, mildewed bits
from others that are only slightly damp—
besides the corner full of storage racks
that rode the flood like chins.

So there you are
pieced out in pick-ups from the neighborhood,
new-fashioned from old fragments: damaged goods.

Roy Hamilton

Dominatrix

You need not kill to be my friend and die
For love, as we pretend, just hold your hand
In coals that melt and transform skin like sand
To tears of glass that shatter as you cry.
Come then and let me punish you again—
And burn that heart that summons you away
From tingling lust, for only cowards pray
For mercy, as they drink the wine of pain.
Your hunger titillates me as you scream
And cringe, like all that suffer my control
To couple me in hell and fill their bowl
With excrement and foul regret and dream—
Of love inflicted wounds that never heal
And leather fantasies I render real.

Zachary Chartkoff

“Gepetto’s Despair”

First there was the wooden table, a chair,
a rough little bed, the hut with a crooked
roof, all fashioned from Gepetto’s despair,
lashed to a raft. That a father floated
across the seas looking for his lost child
was lost on you. No. It was the wretched
raft you loved; to go out upon this wild
terror alone. The seas are all haunted
with ghosts crying “bambino! I’ll save you!”
But tell me, little ass-eared ghost, do they?
When you return to this light, tell me then,
who went to hell all on your account? Who
raised you up from the brine, wiped away
the muck and taught you to breathe once again?

Tom Riley

The Apotheosis of Stephen King

*(Horror icon Stephen King was guest editor
for "The Best Short Stories of 2007.")*

At last he knows the fruits of his success.
More than the great big house that horror built,
This pays him back: to this he can say yes
Without a particle of lowbrow guilt.
His former role he did play to the hilt—
A taller, more substantial Vincent Price.
The vampires rose, the vats of gore were spilt.
The literati felt it wasn't nice.
Success, though, has this feature of a vice:
It gradually converts howls of objection
Into purrs of approval, melts the ice
And finally concludes a warm connection.
Thus Stephen King, whose stories peddled fear,
Selects the best short stories of the year.

Marc Alan Di Martino

Amateur Atheists

We play at not believing much in God
Declare man-made religion obsolete
And not much fun, a hoax, a bitter fraud,
The trapdoor of the cynical elite.

From church and synagogue we ban ourselves
The way we would have been banned ages hence
For unbelief in angels, hell or elves;
We pray for reason, patience, common sense.

We love what's best in man and woman, too.
No tribal ideologies for us:
The world is big enough for me and you.

But when the sufferings of Job set in
We'll need someone to spar with, kvetch and fuss—
Then we'll discover God beneath our skin.

Sally Cook

Gravity

The rain that damps beneath the crust
Is called a spring. It wakes the dust
That feeds the incandescent blooms.
When rain falls down, should there not be
A dearth of blossoms vertically,
Hung upside down in chambered rooms
With roots exposed for all to see
And buried buds beneath the sea?
Down in the deep the sweet bird sings—
I do not understand such things.

Little Volcanoes

There are few things that may be said.
If giant intellects, long dead,
Spoke freely of their thoughts today
Their mouths would be sewn shut. The way

We do things now, we legislate
To outlaw conflict, rage, and hate.
Originality? That sin
Is worthy of some Ritalin.

Best if you seem polite, diverse,
In your opinions. What is worse,
Compliant though you seem to be,
You see the below, where none can see.

George Held

The Katzenjammer Men

They were the Hans and Fritz of Edgedale School,
Pennsylvania Dutchmen come east to raise
Their status in the silver suburbs. Praise
Be to the punishment they gave this fool.
Susquehanna's Steinseifer, pale and hairy,
Whom the guys looked up to as a big jock,
Made me spend a weekend in the library
To write my overdue research project.
State U's tanned and fair-haired Untermacher
Called me to the front of the room to dress
Me down, but I smirked and, before my peers,
He grew enraged and shoved me on my ass.
 Today such action would be child abuse;
 Back then, my smirk gave him a just excuse.

John Grey

Sonnet of the Pious

It's not a mournful subject is it? Death?
That's where they stow the halos and the light.
Each Sunday, starched of collar, short of breath,
Did not I hear confirmed that I was right?
But when I broach the subject, even slight
Referrals to a passing, then each face
Turns to me like I've sunk day into night.
Her being in a far, far better place
Can't save me from my damnable disgrace,
As all wish on me quick and brutal death
For making their unwilling souls pause, face
When breath becomes cessation of a breath—
Each time I deign to tell them what I know
They tell me where to stick my inner glow.

M. B. McLatchey

House on Fire

Too late to talk of causes. A faulty switch?
A pile of letters left in an attic's heat?
Desire unveiled too late to relinquish

its sensual trail? All these, and love's capacity
to make a fearful pit, then send a Beatrice to us
in Limbo. O Mulciber, protector of the smiths,

patron of handicrafts; molder of metal
dreams. You conceived me: one of your
handmaidens forged out of bronze and yellow

flames. Beautiful corridor of fire
transmuting ordinary days into shimmering
reliefs. I was the heat, the blast of stars

rooting itself in love's soft metal. I was the maker
of alloys naturally weak. Gifts that I hammered
and hammered. I never ran from technique.

Derek Updegraff

Between Pit Stops at Late-night Diners

*Be wise, remove the dregs from the wine, and with the
space of our lives being short, prune away long hope.*

*...Sapias, vina liques, et spatio brevi
spem longam reseces. . . .*

—Horace, Odes 1.11

Sweetness,

You're right. Our route looks vague, but I
will always long for scrambled eggs and toast
at 2:00 am with you, for the dark roast
of diner coffee with loose dregs, the sigh
of harnessed furniture, the fickle sky,
and for sharp winds colliding with the coast,
but I will long to keep long hope the most;
its limbs get pruned enough by passersby.

Let's let ours thrive among these grounds suppressed
by U-Haul traces and uncertain jobs
and pack it with us if we find it's time
to move again; let's douse it with the best
of cheap champagnes, then marvel as it bobs
among treetops, magnificent, sublime.

We'll keep it in its prime
always, our sweet long-hope, caressingly
maintaining it against adversity.

Now in uncertainty,
let's keep each of our shorter hopes at hand
but not neglect the long ones we have planned.

George Good

Free Fall

While Iamb only dreamed of being free,
his cousin risked a trocheeotomy.
“Hey, take a look,” the convalescent cried,
“the operation worked. The doc untied
my feet. Just watch me hop and skip and jump,
then slide in circles on my padded rump.
O what a slowpoke, stuck there in the mud—
I’m sailing far above you on a cloud.
You’re weighed down by an arbitrary rule;
so when I’m playing, you must go to school.
I feel as footloose now as you are stiff...”
His dance was interrupted by a cliff.
In light of his fallible kinfolk’s fate,
Iamb resolved his own release could wait.

George Good

The World Turned Upside Down

The view from up here is cerulean.
Spending our time and money in chic stores,
we keep the faith: Never too rich or thin.
Supremely blessed, we thank our lucky stars.
Not her cap's very button nor the soles
of her shoes, we dwell in the middle of
Dame Fortune's favors, but we're not her fools.
We'll work and save and buy that strumpet's love.
Deep in the dungeon of our lives, the one
hope—all that's left in our small cup—we nurse
is of God's justice, which some day will stun
the mighty with a shift into reverse.
The last shall be first in eternity,
while those on top go straight to double-g.

Donna Lee Van Cott

Muffled Agony of the Lightly Damaged

*Ridiculous the waste sad time
Stretching before and after.*
—T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

They didn't lack a parent as a child
or suffer a disfiguring disease.
Disaster's blows were relatively mild.

With shame they envy the pathetic ease
of one who loses almost everything—
of 9/11 orphans, amputees...

And being lucky fails to soothe the sting
of losses that were covered by insurance
but leave them hollowed out and hankering

for normalcy or hope, that sap endurance.
The hot indignity of infinite garbage,
the maddening madness of fruitless forbearance.

It draws no sympathy and scant reportage—
The muffled agony of the lightly damaged.

Donna Lee Van Cott

Geography

The levees crumbled north of here.
North of here has disappeared.
South of here was in the clear.

Lakeview Broadmoor City Park,
lie one year later in the dark,
wear mute despair and a watermark.

Freret to Claiborne was a nest
of violent drug gangs and unrest.
It's now an urban wilderness.
(A block away, I must confess—
I think I like it this way best.)

Here is relatively good.
Here on Soniat waters stood
some 3 feet. Toxic gumbo rotted wood,

submerged my yard, left one white rose
I tried to kill last winter, yet it grows
—how it withstood my hand saw, Heaven knows—

with company from three new grandiflora,
two hibiscus, four ligustrum, two hydrangea,
two young trees, an oleander

I planted in January. Now, across the street
professional porch-sitters have a treat
to look at, so I keep it neat.

South of here Katrina's breath
blew both less deadly and more deft.
Lake Pontchartrain just licked and left.

Repairs are mostly finished over there.
I walk to buy the paper and compare
their progress. It seems more than fair.

My neighbors' homes are slain or slanted.
Mine stands straight, my garden's planted.
To be absolutely candid,
purgatory has me stranded
with nothing that I take for granted.

Donna Lee Van Cott

Advice

Worship only love. There is no other God but love. There is no love but love, imaginary real love, love too hot to burn or smother.

If you must have gods choose wisely: Peyton Manning, Eric Clapton. Choose celebs: they are more interesting and you'll never have to meet them.

If you didn't really mean to do it when you die just ask forgiveness. Tell them love is really murder and they don't know shit about shit.

No one ever gets to ever do all they were meant to do. Bite into what is true. Remember, nothing is too big to lose or too small.

Peter Austin

What Have You To Say?

“Your essay was unconscionably late.”

“But sir,” he mumbles, studying the floor,
As if, thereon, lay *Lear*, or *Henry Four*,
Instead of tea-stained carpet. —“But your fate
Was settled” (here, he crumples like a sack),
“By all that you imported from the Net,
Without, of course, acknowledging your debt
To Bradley, Wilson Knight or Maynard Mack;

“And, as for what remains, it’s so manqué,
By misappreciation of the Bard
And bits of Priscian’s *matière gris*, so marred,
That ... don’t just sit there! What have you to say?”
—“My uncle owns a store” (at this, I shrug):
“You look like you could use another rug.” ...

Annabelle Moseley

Rune: San Gimignano

(A *stanza*: an Italian word
that means a kind of “room”)
San Gimignano rises high—
a fifteen-towered bloom

that blazes in the midday sun—
ripe stalks and shafts of light,
room of pillars, city of spines—
airy stanza of ruin.

An alphabet of upper case
and un-translated peaks,
fifteen Rosetta stones remain
of the seventy-two.

Like lotuses of history
thrusting from the blonde hill
over the green Elsa Valley—
the hieroglyphic spill

of rock and walls and shingled roofs
slopes down to Tuscany
where farmland holds the memory,
remains, encoded proof.

Beneath the tentacles of grass
and brown crop-crowded earth,
a ground cartouche of fallen spires,
a rune of secret worth.

Leland Jamieson

Consciousness Stared At

(I sit, a laptop on my thighs.)

Refugee-like, in dark of night,
a rap upon the windowpane
in the back door of my brain: a byte!
Bytes by the kilo seek free rein,
through fingertips, to reach my brain.
Their happy dance on laptop keys
awakes my brainstem by degrees.

My mind, amoeba-like, leaps out,
proffers these bytes a pseudopod.
I'm now extended mind's keen scout
and what I find makes me feel awed:
Consciousness (stared at, her smile broad)
is glad, is laughing, winks at me.
And I, who was just one, am we!

Such solitude! I'd felt alone,
but that was just imagining
the prison bars of what is known.
In her bright resonance, I sing
with every taut and vibrant string
of feeling in the universe.
I exercise this gift—or curse.

Michael Dobberstein

Under the Power Lines

We are here, where the path goes
Straight, marking the long shadows

Of cables strict as formulae, the rich blue
Bubble of the sky aching new

On this summer day perfect as the eye
Of God, as if a God could be whose sigh

Was smooth as the breeze riding the grass
First one way, then a little less

Another. Patterns of rising steel rise and repeat,
Tall as pyramids they rise and repeat.

The lines talk for some, or sing
And once I knew a man who could wring

Thought from stone, who stood
Hours looking upward, to brood

He said, on the just the way
Things were on a bright summer day

Planted, yet how they rise and rise!
And if you keep your eyes

On the top, he said, and stand just so
At the base, exactly below,

You can actually see the sky
Move, and hear the grass sigh.

Looking Back

We look back.
What's gone before, where
We've been.

A vast territory, dim
As a rainy day. Clear
As a known fact.

We look back, don't we.
Like the famous wife
Who couldn't help but turn

No matter what. We yearn
Perhaps, for the sacrifice,
Some transformation, maybe.

Or it's just the longing
To which we all give in.
The old, old ache

Of the limb
We never got used to losing.

Poetry in Translation

Jan Andrzej Morsztyn (1621-1693)

Inconstancy

Your eyes are flames, your brow the sheen of silk.
Your hair is gold, teeth pearls, complexion milk.
Your lips are coral, cheeks ripe apricots
As long, my lady, as we marry thoughts.
But leprous are your apricots should we fight.
Your lips are worms, complexion sickly white,
Your teeth horse bone, your hair a spider's mesh,
Your brow a forge, your eyes two urns of ash.

—Translated from the Polish by Leo Yankevich

Mikhail Lermantov (1814-1841)

The Sail

A lonely sail moves, white on white,
Amid the ocean's mist and foam.
Caught now in a distant light,
What does it seek so far from home?

The halyards groan, the mast-beam creaks;
The sail now billows in the breeze.
It is not happiness it seeks,
Nor happiness from which it flees.

Above, the sun is blithe and warm;
Below, the blue waves rise and crest.
The rebel searches for a storm
As if in storms it could find rest.

—Translated from the Russian by Leo Yankevich

Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855)

Chatyr Dah

The trembling Muslims kiss your foot and pray out loud,
O mast of the Crimean tall ship Chatyr Dah,
Minaret amid the hills and Padishah!
You, having fled above the cliffs into a cloud,

Stand at the gates of heaven, humbling the crowd,
And, like great Gabriel, guard lost Eden's house, your shaw
Of trees a cloak where janissaries keep the law,
Your turban thunderbolts and lightning for the proud.

And yet sun scolds our brows and fog obscures our ways,
Locusts poach our crops and Gavur burn our homes,
Always, Chatyr Dah, as motionless as domes

In Mecca, you remain indifferent to our days,
Creation's dragoman to what below you roams
Who only hears whatever God to nature says.

—Translated from the Polish by Leo Yankevich

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)

Apollo's Archaic Torso

We have no knowledge of his ancient brow
where pippins ripen. Yet his torso gleams,
reflecting the candela, luminous streams
that yet pour from his gaze, his glance's glow

still radiant, though dimmed. If not, his bare
breast would not blind you in the silent turn
of hip and thighs, a smile not flash and burn
through groins, his genitals not ever glare.

If not, this stone would seem deformed and small,
the light beneath his shoulder's sudden fall
not seem a preying panther's shimmering mane,

not burst beyond the limits of the skies,
starlike, until there is no point or plane
blind to your ways. You must change your life.

—Translated from the German by Leo Yankevich

Sergei Yesenin (1895-1925)

The Birch

A birch beneath
My windowsill
Stands like a wreath
In the silver chill

Of winter, white
In the faint glow
Of early light
And softest snow.

The birch still yields
Stars at this time,
Though over fields
Sun breaks through rime.

Dawn wakes the grounds
And sleeping ploughs,
But makes its rounds
Through silver boughs.

—Translated from the Russian by Leo Yankevich

Władysław Broniewski (1897-1963)

14 April

Fatigue and dying wait for us
beyond the other side of joys.
Yet we can always say: enough!
For all our lives we make a choice.

The song is never rendered mute,
borne from catacomb to forum:
it can't rise higher than the soot,
than black ash from the crematorium.

May our word like radium burn
straight through the tissues of our heart.
Glory to those in grave and urn!
Let's move on, though, and do our part.

—Translated from the Polish by Leo Yankevich

Tadeusz Borowski (1922-1951)

Night Over Birkenau

Again night. Again the barbs and lamp,
as heaven circles like a bird of prey,
like a vulture circles over camp.
Corpse-pale, the moon descends, and shows the way.

And like a shield that's cast away in battle,
blue Orion lies among the stars.
The glint of crematoria eyes, the rattle
of lorry engines, the creak of cattle cars.

The heat is stifling. Slumber like a stone.
The lungs are breathless, throat a painful red.
A heavy foot upon the chest alone
breaks the silence of three million dead.

No dawn will come. The night, the night won't end.
Eyes will be dazed from drowsiness and dearth.
Fog over Birkenau will soon descend
as if God's Judgement on the corpse of earth.

—Translated from the Polish by Leo Yankevich

Essays

Joseph S. Salemi

To Sit in Judgment

Life, someone said, is a series of repeated penitential exercises. Like all *bons mots* it's only partially true, but everyone can adduce an instance that illustrates this one's validity. In my case, the penitential exercise is judging poetry contests.

Each year I am invited to pick winners in various competitions held by societies, journals, and organizations. I'm usually asked to judge the categories of metrical, fixed-form, rhyming, light, comic, or satirical verse, but sometimes others as well. I don't refuse, because a refusal by a critic to judge individual poems is tantamount to surrendering in a war. You give up everything you've been fighting for, and you allow the enemy to dictate terms. If I don't judge a contest, some schmuck with a totally alien aesthetic may get the job, and garbage poetry will receive yet another public ratification and endorsement. So I hang in there, even though the labor is largely uncompensated. At least I can make sure that the poetical dregs are eliminated.

Still, it's an ordeal. One wades through sheet after sheet of dreadful stuff, looking for something that shows a modicum of craft. And yes, every so often one finds an excellent poem. But most of the time what you encounter is either totally amateurish drivel, or inchoate poetry—that is, poems that show the outlines and rough shape of something good, but which are only half-done or unpolished. They may have a few good lines, or an interesting premise, or an arresting trope, but all of it is

embedded in a poem that cries out for overhaul and revision and reworking.

For example, I can't recall how many sonnets I have read that start out nicely, and then all of a sudden there's a four-foot line stuck somewhere in the middle. *What the bloody hell is going on?* I scream to myself. *Why has this feckless poet wrecked the meter of a fixed-form poem?* I then fling the clubfooted sonnet into the slush pile of losers.

Or there's the slant-rhyme. I've reconciled myself to tolerating it as an inevitability in the current poetic climate, very much as one must tolerate a certain level of malaria in the tropics. But to *close* a rhyming poem with a slant-rhyme? To use it in the one place in a piece where closure demands an aural register of one's rhyme scheme? It's unendurable. The late Henry George Fischer used to say that employing slant-rhyme at the end of a rhymed poem was the poetic version of *coitus interruptus*. He couldn't understand why anyone would do it, except out of ignorance or incompetence.

Or there's the pig-headed insistence on using straightforward colloquial syntax exclusively, even though some lines might be improved or rendered felicitous by an occasional inversion, or by the help of an older idiomatic turn of phrase. But oh no... some stupid MFA in a writing workshop told the poet that such a thing is *streng verboten*, because it is "old-fashioned." (In America today being old-fashioned is a major crime, comparable to living in the same house for more than three years, or using your parents' bedroom set). As a result these lines limp along, perfectly colloquial and

perfectly lousy. But the poet has obeyed his MFA mentor, and feels suitably virtuous.

There are other annoyances: the sloppy, oversubstituted metrics; the limited range of vocabulary; the pervasive tone of moral earnestness and sincerity; the utter lack of anything exciting or threatening. Why does everyone seem to think that poems have to be child-friendly? Are we writing for the local school board in some backwater hick town?

Other poets have told me that this is typical of poems submitted to competitions: the contestants feel that their submissions must be G-rated and “nice” in order to be considered at all. If that is the case, it’s a great argument for abolishing such contests altogether. Why should we have a system of prize-giving that encourages the worst aspects of American Rotarianism and conformism? Poetry should be something that makes prudes blush, prompts Bible-thumpers to write their congressman, and sends feminists screaming to their support groups. Instead in America we have encouraged a poetry that is as inoffensively suburbanized as an IKEA outlet.

However, the most purgatorial process one has to undergo in judging poetry competitions doesn’t have anything to do with the above complaints. It has to do with voice and point of view. It is maddening to read an endless stream of poems where the speaker or narrator is obviously identical with the writer of the poem, and where what you get is an expression of feeling, an account of some actual incident, a description of natural beauty, or a statement of personal opinion.

My objection isn't to these four things *per se*. Obviously any one of them could provide the basis for a good poem, and in countless cases have done so. But the problem is that they are *not fictive*, and therefore limiting if used in isolation. Poets who think that these are the only foundation on which to build a poem implicitly believe the myth that poetry is just another means of personal expression. And if you believe that myth, you are hamstrung as a poet.

The inability of many modern Americans to produce fictive poems is ironic in the light of our national history. Our "tall tales" and "storifying" used to be world-famous. We were the land of liars and con-artists and fable-spinning frontiersmen. With that kind of cultural substrate, we should have become a nation of profoundly fictive poets. And we did produce some brilliant ones like Poe and Melville and E.A. Robinson.

But unfortunately American Puritanism kicked in, as it always does, and we no longer feel that it is appropriate to be fictive. We are now loyal to the bogus ideals of "truth" and "sincerity" and "honesty." And you can see the result in those reams of boilerplate that I have to go through when judging poetry contests: the pathetic desire to express some genuine feeling; the laughable attempt to capture in words a pointless epiphany; the mind-numbing fixation on verisimilitude; the anal-retentive need to depict in painstaking detail some natural phenomenon. I can just hear my grandfather thundering *Puzzo della canaglia!* if he were forced to read such stuff.

I'll continue to judge poetry contests whenever invited to do so. Nevertheless, the toughest thing a critic can fight

is a consensus on taste. It's next to impossible to reverse a generally held attitude, and I have no illusions about my chances to pull that off. My predilections in poetry will never be shared by most Americans. I want poetry to have a disreputable, sleazy underside redolent of sex, violence, outrage, and contentiousness—all in perfect meter. I want it to be as venomous as Martial; as bawdy and scatological as Guillaume IX and Chaucer; as sensuous as Marlowe in *Hero and Leander* and Shakespeare in *Venus and Adonis*; as obscene as Aretino and the Earl of Rochester; as shit-kicking as Swift; as in-your-face and pagan as Swinburne; as vulgar as Robert Burns in *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*. From what I read in these poetry competitions, that's not going to happen soon.

Contributors' Notes

Joseph S. Salemi teaches in the Department of Humanities at New York University, and in the Classics Department of both Hunter College and Brooklyn College, C.U.N.Y. His work has appeared in over one hundred journals and literary magazines in the United States and in Britain.

Kathryn Jacobs is a medievalist and a poet. She has had poems in *Acumen*, *Measure*, *Quantum Leap*, *Midwest Poetry Review*, *DeCanto*, *ELF*, *Candelabrum*, *Texas Poetry Journal*, *Mezzo Cammin* and *Mobius*. *Quantum Leap* also recently selected her for their “Featured Five.”

Roy Hamilton was born in Toronto in 1952. He operates a successful contracting business and laughs a lot with his wife and two grown daughters.

Zachary Jean Chartkoff received a MFA from UNLV in 1995. As a result he now works as a nurse aide in Grand Rapids, MI, paying off his student loans. He lives in a small house next to a cemetery with his wife and three cats.

Tom Riley has published well over 700 poems in venues ranging from *The Lyric* to *Light* to *Anglican Theological Review*. He teaches Classical languages and English literature in Napa, California.

Marc Alan Di Martino is a poet, journalist and translator. He is the editor of *American Poets Abroad*, a blog/journal of contemporary poetry. He lives and works in Rome, Italy. His work has appeared in *BigCityLit*, *Best Poem*, *The American* and *Pivot*. He is trying to find a publisher for his satiric novel-in-verse. He can be contacted at marc1dimartino@gmail.com.

Sally Cook lives a reclusive country life with her husband, political cartoonist Bob Fisk, and cats. She is both painter and poet. She has been the recipient of several scholarships and awards. Cook keeps a sharp eye out for the psychological portrait in both disciplines.

George Held, a five-time Pushcart Prize nominee, has published poems, short stories, translations, essays, and book reviews in such places as *Circumference*, *Confrontation*, *5 AM*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *Notre Dame Review*. In December 2007, Garrison Keillor read his poem “Aftermath” on *The Writer’s Almanac*. Among his ten collections of poems are the chapbooks *Grounded* (2005) and *The Art of Writing and Others* (2007).

John Grey's latest book is "What Else Is There" from *Main Street Rag*. He has been published recently in *Agni*, *Worcester Review*, *South Carolina Review* and *The Pedestal*.

M. B. McLatchey's poems have been published in several journals such as *The American Poetry Journal*, *The National Poetry Review*, *Shenandoah*, and *The Southern Poetry Review*. Her recent awards include the *Annie Finch Award* from the *National Poetry Review*, *The Spoon River Poetry Review's Editors' Prize*, *The Penelope Niven Creative Nonfiction Award*, and the *Vachel Lindsay Prize*. Her poetry collection, *The Labyrinth Walkers* was a finalist for *The American Book Prize*. Currently, she is a professor of Humanities in Orlando, Florida. More information can be found on her website at <http://mbmclatchey.corvidwriters.org>.

Derek Updegraff is a PhD candidate and instructor of English at the University of Missouri. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Iambs & Trochees*, *The Chiron Review*, *Blue Unicorn*, *descant*, *The Deronda Review*, *The Classical Outlook*, *The Pennsylvania Review*, *The Raintown Review*, *Ezra*, and other literary journals.

George Good's poetry has appeared in *Light Quarterly*, *The Evansville Review*, *Iambs & Trochees* and the e-zines *Contemporary Rhyme* and *The Chimaera*.

Donna Lee Van Cott is associate professor of political science at the University of Connecticut. She has published three books on Latin American politics.

Peter Austin lives with his wife and three daughters in Toronto, where he teaches English at Seneca College. Over ninety of his poems have been published, in magazines and anthologies in the USA (including *Contemporary Sonnet*, *Iambs & Trochees* and *The Lyric*), Canada, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Germany. As well as poetry, he writes plays, and his musical adaptation of *The Wind in the Willows* has enjoyed four productions, the most recent in July '07, in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Annabelle Moseley has published over 100 poems in various journals including *The Lyric*, *Oberon*, *The Seventh Quarry*, *The Texas Review*, and *Mezzo Cammin*. Street Press recently published her third chapbook, *Still Life*. When not writing or teaching, Moseley paints and dances flamenco—but never at the same time.

Leland Jamieson lives and writes in East Hampton, Connecticut, USA. Recent and forthcoming work appears in numerous magazines. His first book, *21st Century Bread: Poems*, can be previewed and is available at www.jamiesonspetry.com—along with “Poem for the Week” and “Hear the Poet Read” features, four book reviews, and readers’ and editors’ comments.

Michael Dobberstein teaches creative writing and other writing courses at Purdue University Calumet in Hammond, IN. He has published poems in *Poetry* and *The Literary Review*.

Leo Yankevich’s latest books are *The Last Silesian* (The Mandrake Press, 2005) and *Tikkun Olam & Other Poems* (The New Formalist Press, 2008).

Jan Andrzej Morsztyn (1621-1693) was one of the leading poets of the Baroque period in Poland. His extravagant style was influenced by the Italian poet Giambattista Marino. (Read more here.)

Mikhail Lermantov (1814-1841) was a leading Russian Romantic poet. (Read more here.)

Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855) was the leading poet of Polish Romanticism. (Read more here.)

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) was 20th century Austria’s greatest poet. (Read more here.)

Sergei Yesenin (1895-1925) was a Russian poet of peasant ancestry. He took his own life in 1926. (Read more here.)

Władysław Broniewski (1897-1963) was a Polish poet and soldier. (Read more here.)

Tadeusz Borowski (1922-1951) was a gentile Auschwitz survivor. He committed suicide in 1951. (Read more here.)

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