

The Summer Poetry issue of *The Fiddlehead* arrived a few days ago. For a poet or an apprentice poet or a poetry lover, it's the greatest bargain of the year, \$15 for an issue packed with an eclectic variety of poetry, two essays, and seven reviews. Even the ads are interesting with their six announcements of poetry contests.

Two internationally well-known poets, the American Mary Jo Salter and the Australian Lee Murray, are featured with many poems and an essay on the craft of each.

Ross Leckie, in his erudite essay on Salter, writes about the poem "Little Men": "The poem opens with an exquisite chiasmus..." This is the second time recently that I've seen the word chiasmus. Its definition is "a rhetorical or literary figure in which words, grammatical constructions, or concepts are repeated in reverse order, in the same or a modified form." Salter's exquisite chiasmus is "Two men I've loved loved little men/when they were little children--/".

I love connections, synchronicities, coincidences. They provide my world with an organic quality, make it seem less chaotic. Looking up Salter on the Internet, I see that she taught at my alma mater Mount Holyoke College for 23 years and that she studied with Elizabeth Bishop, who provided me with connections in my last column.

In his fine essay Ian LeTourneau writes, "Very recently, *The Atlantic* published 'The Greatest Poet Alive: The Feral Genius of Australia's Les Murray', a gushing, appreciative overview of Murray's career disguised as a review of his latest book *Waiting for the Past*." I was happy to read poems of this "greatest poet alive"—one I hadn't even heard about. His poem "The Broad Bean Sermon" is alone worth the price of the magazine. "Beanstalks, in any breeze, are a slack church parade/without belief, saying trespass against us in unison/recruits in mint Air Force dacron, with unbuttoned leaves."

A while ago I wrote about Shane Neilson's book *On Shaving Off His Face*. Salon's Thomas Hodd reviews the book. "Yet one also has a sense that behind these cerebral machinations--reinforced by allusions and images drawn from the worlds of medicine and art and religion—are deep, emotional struggles that fuel his poetic impulse." Neilson himself writes a review of Sarah Tolmie's book of sonnets *Trio* with an interesting discussion of the form. He alerts me to a fad in poetry. "But 2011 was when Canadian poetry hit Peak Sonnet. If anything, the sonnet craze has passed, the market crashed, the fad's been had." Parts of Neilson's long poem "Dysphoria" are featured. Dysphoria I learned means "a state of unease or generalized dissatisfaction with life."

M. Travis Lane's review of *A New Index for Predicting Catastrophe* by Madhur Anand is entertaining. Of how many reviews of poetry books can you say that? First of all her own distinctive voice amuses me. I know her well so know the voice to be completely authentic. As I read the review, I could hear her reciting it. She alerted me to another fad: "Too often she [Anand] succumbs to the currently fashionable 'list' or 'stacking' effect, which to my mind is neither poetry nor prose."

I've heard Lynn Davies read out loud all three of the terrific poems included in the issue and am happy to have copies. "In the Bookstore" is a droll "found" poem of conversation snippets she's heard as a clerk in Westminster Books: "Anything with a squirrel on the cover—anything."

Garth and Lucille Caseley invited me to a *Wolastoq* boat ride on the St. John River. So many different perspectives of Fredericton were involved--time for one. We went down the river as far as the Agriculture Research Centre. In a car that distance would take no time at all; in a boat the distance

seemed real. Visual: you see the city from down below—looking up at the buildings, going under the bridges. Relationships: speeding over the Westmorland Street Bridge, there's hardly any distance between the north and south sides, but on the river, the distance is considerable.

It's difficult to see familiar things with a new perspective--one of the functions of art. I was standing in front of my stove waiting for the timer to go off when I looked at the Matisse print "Window Over Tangiers" hanging above the kitchen sink. It's hung there for 17 years. I realized with a start that I no longer look at its specificities; I only look at its blocks of colour as if I were looking at an abstract painting. I'd forgotten about a small person on a donkey, its perspective somehow faulty. This work of art is such a part of me—how could it not be after 17 years in such a prominent place? I've loved it from the beginning, am now taking it for granted, but for a few minutes I saw it afresh.